going concern, existed from 1955 to 1962. It ha
100, eleven of them by Jimmy Clanton. "Don't You
raph by Fred Faulk.)

ıms produces additional income. Other
-recorded, some Ace songs, and Vincent
rformance royalties. He was paid $1,000
ı the movie *American Hot Wax* and
'ist Know It" for the movie *The Big*
:ords under the Ace label, though
ther hit are dim. Sophisticated produc-
ques in the record industry today are so
ınies such as Ace cannot raise the capital
ɔmpetitors. Moreover, the necessity of
r MTV, now required to make a record
anies out of the national market. In addi-
y costs, the distribution system, relying
ıo are interested only in stocking record
favors the large corporations. Small com-
obstacles, but few do.[51]

ompany, Inc., and Huey P. Smith and John Vincent
and $3,500 to himself. Vincent bought "Don't You
ire," "Roberta," and "Rockin' Pneumonia and the
porary problems facing small companies, see R. Sen
Industry Revisited (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986).

Richard B. Kielbowicz

Postal Subsidies for the Press and the Business of Mass Culture, 1880–1920

Low second-class postage made it easy for national magazines and regional newspapers to reach their readers in the late nineteenth century. But the Post Office and some members of Congress questioned the wisdom of a policy that enabled advertising-filled publications to circulate at subsidized rates. This article traces the efforts to reform the postal policy governing periodicals, which became enmeshed in Progressive Era debates about the value of mass culture and government's role in promoting it.

A small, seemingly incongruous, provision of the 1917 War Revenue Act restructured the mail subsidy long enjoyed by newspapers and magazines. Still followed today, the policy set low postal rates on the reading matter of periodicals and higher rates on advertising contents, with postage for the latter calibrated to the distance mailed. Although no one expected this measure to contribute substantially to financing the war, it provoked nearly as much debate as steep tax increases on personal income, businesses, estates, and luxury items. That publishers agitated through their columns only partly explains the intense controversy surrounding the government subsidy that brought newspapers and magazines into millions of homes. Recognizing communication's role as an agent of commerce and purveyor of culture, many supporters of the postal reform hoped that it would bolster the small-town press in the face of increasing competition from the national media, protect local retailers from large-scale merchandisers, and, ultimately, stave off the incursions of an aggrandizing national culture that they found unsettling.

The mass circulation magazines and city newspapers that emerged in the 1880s and flourished thereafter were highly visible manifesta-

RICHARD B. KIELBOWICZ is associate professor in the School of Communications at the University of Washington.

I would like to thank Professor Linda Lawson for her comments on several drafts of this article.

Business History Review 64 (Autumn 1990): 451–488. © 1990 by The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

tions of modern industrial society. In their scale of operations, editorial content, and advertisements, these periodicals both embodied and projected modern mass culture. Unlike the small-town press, mass circulation publications endeavored to reach regional or national audiences; increasingly, they were edited with an urban and suburban readership foremost in mind. The names and places in the news thus grew physically and psychologically remote from readers. Stories subtly reminded rural residents in particular that control of their lives lay in abstract forces operating far beyond their communities. Although their contents sometimes paid homage to the virtues of quiet, small-town life, the mass media's central message in fact undercut these qualities.[1]

Advertising, more than any other feature of popular publications, served as a conduit of the industrial economy and its concomitant mass culture. Publishers increasingly conceived of their periodicals, especially magazines, as extensions of the nation's marketing system; delivering consumers to producers became their raison d'être. Modern advertising tried to inculcate the habits and virtues of consumption, helping to wean Americans from their nineteenth-century preoccupation with production. Ironically, stories that reminded readers of their declining control over public affairs often were surrounded by advertisements for brand-name products promising increased control over readers' personal lives—more acceptable appearance, better health, and the like. By building confidence in products, especially through brand loyalty, advertisements cultivated consumers' trust in unseen, distant companies. Such corporations also reached directly into thousands of communities. Mail-order houses bought space in small-town newspapers—advertisements revealingly called "foreign" by editors—diverting income from local merchants. Combining elements of communication, culture, and commerce, turn-of-the-century advertising trumpeted a way of life welcomed by many but clearly not by all.[2]

Those seeking to minimize the dislocations caused by social change increasingly fought their battles in the arena of federal policy-making.

[1] For a convenient summary of the connection between mass culture and the business imperatives of the popular press, see Richard Ohmann, "Where Did Mass Culture Come From? The Case of Magazines," *Berkshire Review* 16 (1981): 85–101; Sally F. Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York, 1989), esp. part 3. For general discussions of the tensions between urban and rural culture in the late 1800s, see Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885–1914* (Chicago, Ill., 1957); *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985), 3–21.

[2] T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880–1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Crit-*

n their scale of operations, editor
e periodicals both embodied and
re. Unlike the small-town press, mas
:avored to reach regional or national
were edited with an urban and subur-
ind. The names and places in the news
:hologically remote from readers. Stu-
dents in particular that control of their
:rating far beyond their communities,
ietimes paid homage to the virtues of
media's central message in fact undercut

y other feature of popular publications,
lustrial economy and its concomitant
asingly conceived of their periodicals,
ions of the nation's marketing system;
cers became their raison d'être. Modern
he habits and virtues of consumption,
om their nineteenth-century preoccu-
ically, stories that reminded readers of
ublic affairs often were surrounded by
: products promising increased control
re acceptable appearance, better health,
nce in products, especially through
ated consumers' trust in unseen,
ns also reached directly into thou-
ouses bought space in small-town
vealingly called "foreign" by editors—
:rchants. Combining elements of com-
merce, turn-of-the-century advertising
med by many but clearly not by all.[2]
the dislocations caused by social change
s in the arena of federal policy-making.

onnection between mass culture and the business
:hard Ohmann, "Where Did Mass Culture Come
e Review 16 (1981): 85–101; Sally F. Griffith, *Home
e Emporia Gazette* (New York, 1989), esp. part 3.
:etween urban and rural culture in the late 1800s,
rialism, 1885–1914* (Chicago, Ill., 1957); *The Consu
on*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel

n to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Ther-
1880–1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Crit-*

By the early twentieth century, Richard L. McCormick has noted, "government explicitly took account of the clash of interests and fashioned definite means to adjust, regulate, and mitigate the consequences of social disharmony." Restructuring the postal subsidy was a "means to adjust, regulate, and mitigate the consequences" of a communication system that, using government resources, blanketed the nation with the symbols and messages of an urban industrial order.[3] As industries centrally involved in the production and dissemination of public culture, journalism and advertising certainly exercised "subtle power to assign meaning and significance to various cultural phenomena."[4] The postal subsidy extended to publishing firms was the most obvious pressure point available to policymakers seeking to constrain or redirect the cultural thrust of the print media.

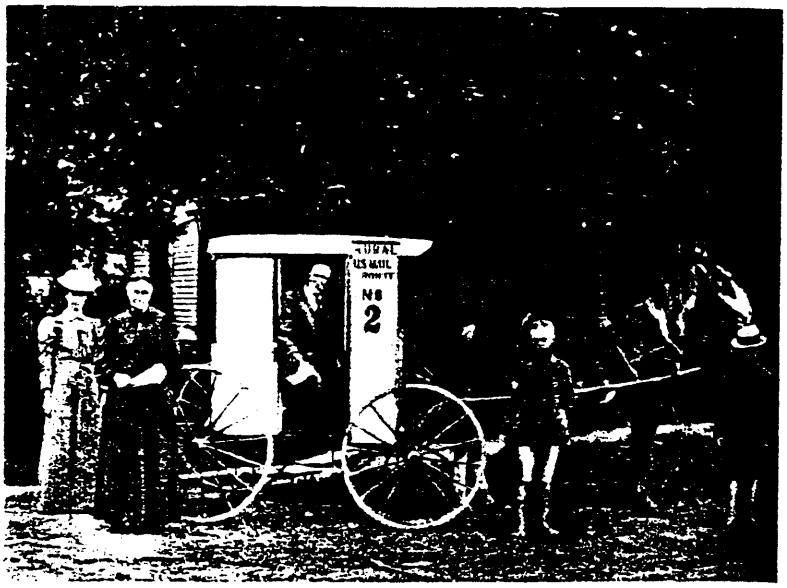
On another level, restructuring the postal subsidy was regulatory in that one segment of an industry tried to contain, however ineffectually, a competing segment. Although most journalism histories, written with a libertarian bent, portray the press as engaged in endless battles against government censorship, the contest that preoccupied most publishers after 1880 was an intramural one: periodicals vied with one another for subscribers and, especially, for advertising.[5] As businesses battling over postal policy, periodicals divided along the same dimensions—urban/rural, region, and firm size—that characterized intra-industry struggles in many fields. The 1917 postal reform represented a victory for small, rural, mainly southern and midwestern publications. This interpretation comports with Robert Wiebe's explanation of the impetus behind many reforms during Woodrow Wilson's administration but partly confutes Gabriel Kolko's assertion that

ical Essays in American History, 1880–1980, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York, 1983), 1–38; Christopher P. Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-Market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880–1920," in ibid., 39–64; Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1989); Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York, 1989).

[3] Richard L. McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York, 1986), 93–132, 223–27, 263–87, quote at 225.

[4] For an explication of the concept of public culture, see Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 73 (June 1986): 120–36, quote at 126; see also T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *American Historical Review* 90 (June 1985): 567–93.

[5] The libertarian interpretation of press-government relations, which largely ignores the government's dealings with the press as a business, is critiqued in Joseph P. McKerns, "The Limits of Progressive Journalism History," *Journalism History* 4 (Autumn 1977): 88–92; John D. Stevens, "Freedom of Expression: New Dimensions," in *Mass Media and the National Experience*, ed. John D. Stevens and Ronald T. Farrar (New York, 1971), 14–37.



The Advent of Rural Free Delivery • The free delivery of the U.S. mail to rural mailboxes opened the American countryside, such as the portion of the route in Crawfordsville, Indiana, shown here, to national magazines and merchandisers in the late 1890s. (Reprinted from *Annual Report of the Post Office*, 1899, plate following p. 204.)

"one type of firm—usually older and with larger vested interests—confronted and constrained another."[6]

The 1917 law succeeded where earlier attempts at restructuring the subsidy had failed because unusual political opportunities coincided with intra-industry cleavages. A bloc of rural lawmakers used the financial exigencies brought on by the First World War to shift rate-making legislation outside its customary channels. They fashioned a postal policy pleasing both to those who harbored partisan grudges against the popular press and to those who resented the mass culture purveyed by these media. And the 1917 policy reform succeeded because it fragmented the postal subsidy's constituencies, pitting the politically potent rural press, allied with Post Office administrators, against mass circulation periodicals.

[6] Robert H. Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962); Gabriel Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History* (New York, 1976), 9; see also Wiebe's *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York, 1967); and Kolko's *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916* (New York, 1963).

GEORGETOWN UNIV. LIBRARY

he free delivery of the U.S. mail to rural mailboxes
s the portion of the route in Crawfordsville, Indiana,
merchandisers in the late 1890s. (Reprinted from
late following p. 204.)

and with larger vested interests—
er."[6]

earlier attempts at restructuring
unusual political opportunities coin-
ages. A bloc of rural lawmakers used
it on by the First World War to shift
its customary channels. They fashioned
those who harbored partisan grudges
those who resented the mass culture
d the 1917 policy reform succeeded
l subsidy's constituencies, pitting the
llied with Post Office administrators
licals.

Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement (Cam-
n Currents in Modern American History (New York,
Order, 1877–1920 (New York, 1967); and Kolko's
tation of American History, 1900–1916 (New York,

Origins of the Postal Subsidy for the Press

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the federal government wielded postal policy as an instrument of national development. Despite some reservations voiced by more tradition-minded communities about the social effects of a national communication system, there were few serious challenges—and no successful ones—to the notion that government properly had a role in underwriting the dissemination of public information. The original postal subsidy for newspapers attracted the strong support of both Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans. Federalists expected news circulating by post to solidify a strong central government, whereas the Republicans hoped that reports of the administration's abuses mailed throughout the nation would topple the opposition. Both objectives required cheap newspaper postage. Furthermore, the generation that crafted the first postal policy recognized that a nation as geographically and as socially diverse as the United States would encounter difficulties sustaining national unity. Indeed, as Congress labored over the first major postal law, the Whiskey Rebellion was developing in western Pennsylvania, reminding lawmakers of the fragile cohesion of the new nation.[7]

Consequently, the first significant U.S. postal law incorporated two provisions that facilitated the widespread circulation of news. First, from 1792 until 1873, editors were allowed to exchange copies of their newspapers postage-free among one another; this was the most important means of gathering nonlocal news (some editors exchanged hundreds of copies a week) until the telegraph fostered the growth of wire services in the mid-nineteenth century. Second, and more important in the long run, was the decision to adopt a nearly flat rate for periodicals. The 1792 postal law, modified in 1794, allowed newspapers—regardless of size, weight, or advertising content—to circulate within one hundred miles or anywhere in the state of publication for one cent; those mailed outside the state and beyond a hundred miles paid 1.5 cents. In sharp contrast, letter postage varied according to distance and the number of sheets; the 1792 law had nine zones, with postage for a single sheet ranging from 6 to 25 cents.

With only one short-lived exception—when Congress, manifesting mounting sectionalism, created several rate zones for periodicals in 1851, only to return to a flat rate a year later—the nearly flat rate structure for periodicals remained intact throughout the nineteenth

[7] Richard B. Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700–1860s* (New York, 1989), chaps. 1 and 3.

century. Despite the persistence of the flat rate for periodicals, congressional debates over postal policy reflected abiding tensions between nationalism and localism. One result, a concession to those who disliked the unimpeded flow of urban newspapers throughout the nation, was the postage-free circulation of weekly newspapers within the county of publication, a measure thought to insulate the small-town press from urban competition. Magazines, on the other hand, were assessed higher postage than newspapers until midcentury but also benefited from a largely unzoned rate schedule. Thus, the early twentieth century debates over zoning postage revisited old questions about postal policy, the circulation of periodicals, and national unity, but this time in an era of modern publishing.[8]

Postal Administrators and Advertising

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, postal policy-making moved out of a relatively simple distributive mode and began incorporating elements of regulation.[9] The genesis of the Mail Classification Act of 1879, which established the four categories used today, exemplified this new policy environment. The act originated with experienced postal administrators who sought to reduce marketers' and publishers' growing use of the highly subsidized rates. Administrative initiatives to curb the circulation of advertising circulars and mail-order journals had proved only partly effective in the 1860s and 1870s. To strengthen its hand, the Post Office urged Congress to redefine the primitive second-class mail category so that it would clearly exclude advertising sheets. Postal officials fine-tuned the legislation in consultation with leading newspaper and magazine publishers in New York City, Philadelphia, and perhaps a few other large cities. Despite differences, newspaper and magazine interests closed ranks with one another and with postal authorities against the so-called illegitimate periodicals, publications designed primarily for advertising purposes.[10]

Congress intended the Mail Classification Act of 1879 to subsidize informative periodicals in the second class and to relegate advertising matter to the much more expensive third class. Postal adminis-

[8] See generally ibid.

[9] McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy*, 197–227.

[10] Act of March 3, 1879 (Mail Classification Act), 20 Stat. 358-60; Richard B. Kielbowicz, "Origins of the Second-Class Mail Category and the Business of Policymaking, 1863–1879," *Journalism Monographs*, no. 96 (April 1986).

UNIV. LIBRARY

century. Despite the persistence of the flat rate for periodicals, congressional debates over postal policy reflected abiding tensions between nationalism and localism. One result, a concession to those who disliked the unimpeded flow of urban newspapers throughout the nation, was the postage-free circulation of weekly newspapers within the county of publication, a measure thought to insulate the small-town press from urban competition. Magazines, on the other hand, were assessed higher postage than newspapers until midcentury but also benefited from a largely unzoned rate schedule. Thus, the early twentieth century debates over zoning postage revisited old questions about postal policy, the circulation of periodicals, and national unity, but this time in an era of modern publishing.[8]

Postal Administrators and Advertising

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, postal policy-making moved out of a relatively simple distributive mode and began incorporating elements of regulation.[9] The genesis of the Mail Classification Act of 1879, which established the four categories used today, exemplified this new policy environment. The act originated with experienced postal administrators who sought to reduce marketers' and publishers' growing use of the highly subsidized rates. Administrative initiatives to curb the circulation of advertising circulars and mail-order journals had proved only partly effective in the 1860s and 1870s. To strengthen its hand, the Post Office urged Congress to redefine the primitive second-class mail category so that it would clearly exclude advertising sheets. Postal officials fine-tuned the legislation in consultation with leading newspaper and magazine publishers in New York City, Philadelphia, and perhaps a few other large cities. Despite differences, newspaper and magazine interests closed ranks with one another and with postal authorities against the so-called illegitimate periodicals, publications designed primarily for advertising purposes.[10]

Congress intended the Mail Classification Act of 1879 to subsidize informative periodicals in the second class and to relegate advertising matter to the much more expensive third class. Postal adminis-

[8] See generally ibid.

[9] McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy*, 197–227.

[10] Act of March 3, 1879 (Mail Classification Act), 20 Stat. 358-60; Richard B. Kielbowicz, "Origins of the Second-Class Mail Category and the Business of Policymaking, 1863–1879," *Journalism Monographs*, no. 96 (April 1986).

MILLERSVILLE UNIV. LIBRARY

flat rate for periodicals, con-
.cted abiding tensions between
ılt, a concession to those who dis-
newspapers throughout the nation,
of weekly newspapers within the
hought to insulate the small-town
ıgazines, on the other hand, were
papers until midcentury but also
ıte schedule. Thus, the early twen-
ostage revisited old questions about
riodicals, and national unity, but
blishing.[8]

ors and Advertising

ıth century, postal policy-making
stributive mode and began incor-
The genesis of the Mail Classifica-
ed the four categories used today,
onment. The act originated with
who sought to reduce marketers'
highly subsidized rates. Adminis-
ion of advertising circulars and
rtly effective in the 1860s and
Office urged Congress to rede-
l ...egory so that it would clearly
officials fine-tuned the legislation
paper and magazine publishers in
l perhaps a few other large cities.
d magazine interests closed ranks
l authorities against the so-called
ıs designed primarily for advertis-

lassification Act of 1879 to subsi-
second class and to relegate adver-
pensive third class. Postal adminis-

Policy, 197–227.
Act), 20 Stat. 358-60; Richard B. Kielbowicz,
ıd the Business of Policymaking, 1863–1879,"

Newspaper and Periodical Stamps • From 1875 to 1898, the Post Office used stamps like those pictured in denominations up to $100 to cover the huge mailings of publishers. The stamps were attached to a statement of mailing that remained in the office. With postage at one cent a pound after 1885, a $100 stamp could be used to mail 10,000 pounds. (Reprinted from U.S. Post Office Department, *A Description of United States Postage Stamps, 1847–1942* [Washington, D.C., 1942], p. 29.)

trators, however, found this distinction simplistic and unworkable, as advertising in all kinds of formats proliferated during the 1880s and thereafter. Beyond some easily met technical requirements, second-class matter had to disseminate "information of a public character, or [be] devoted to literature, the sciences, arts, or some special industry, and hav[e] a legitimate list of subscribers." The law withheld the privileged rate from "publications designed primarily for advertising purposes, or for free circulation, or for circulation at nominal rates."

The third class embraced other printed matter, mainly advertising circulars and books.[11]

Low second-class rates tantalized publishers and advertisers looking for a way to reach the reader-consumer. Second-class mail paid two cents a pound until 1885, when Congress reduced it to one cent, where it remained until 1917. With third-class postage set at one cent per two ounces—nominally eight times as much but actually more because third class paid by the piece rather than in bulk—publishers of all kinds of printed matter naturally tried to pass their wares at the subsidized rate.[12] The Post Office battled "Second Class Matter Fiends," mailers who devised ingenious schemes to pass printed material at the lowest possible rates. In classifying a periodical, postal administrators judged its intent or character to determine whether it was primarily or incidentally designed for advertising purposes. The problem, as a congressional commission recognized in 1907, was that "every periodical is designed for advertising purposes or no periodical is so designed." Resolving this dilemma propelled the various postal reform proposals of the early 1900s, including the one finally adopted in 1917.[13]

Advertising was transforming periodicals, most strikingly magazines. Before 1900, advertisers furnished less than half of periodicals' income; by 1920, advertising's share approached two-thirds. The number of pages devoted to advertising in monthly magazines more than doubled between 1888 and 1928; for weekly magazines, it rose by a factor of twenty-five. Publishers came to regard subscribers less as readers than as consumers to be delivered to merchandisers. Entrepreneurs launched national magazines in the 1880s and 1890s expressly to serve as vehicles for advertising brand-name consumer items featured by mass retailers. This new genre of magazines, epitomized by the Curtis Publishing Company's *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Country Gentleman*, cut subscription rates to attract a mass middle-class audience. The mails, of course, were crucial in delivering these publications. With advertising-filled periodicals blanketing the nation, second-class mailings grew twenty times faster than population in the four decades after 1880.[14]

[11] 20 Stat. 358–60; Kielbowicz, "Second-Class Mail Category."

[12] H.R. Rep. No. 376, 56th Cong., 1st sess. (1900), 4.

[13] "Second Class Matter Fiends" is a chapter in Marshall Cushing, *The Story of Our Post Office* (Boston, Mass., 1893), 410–16; H.R. Doc. No. 608, 59th Cong., 2d sess. (1907), xxxv–xliii, quote at xxvii [hereafter cited as Penrose-Overstreet Commission].

[14] Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York, 1983), 22–38, 136; Bruce M. Owen, *Economics and Freedom of Expression: Media Structure and the First Amendment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 48–51, 79, 172; Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Adver-*

GEORGETOWN UNIV. LIBRARY

nted matter, mainly advertising c

zed publishers and advertisers look
-consumer. Second-class mail paid
en Congress reduced it to one cent
h third-class postage set at one cent
times as much but actually more
ece rather than in bulk—publishers
rally tried to pass their wares at the
ce battled "Second Class Matter"
genious schemes to pass printed
es. In classifying a periodical, postal
or character to determine whether
signed for advertising purposes. The
nission recognized in 1907, was that
advertising purposes or no periodi-
dilemma propelled the various postal
)s, including the one finally adopted

; periodicals, most strikingly maga-
rnished less than half of periodicals'
approached two-thirds. The num-
monthly magazines more than
r weekly magazines, it rose by
rs came to regard subscribers less as
) be delivered to merchandisers
l magazines in the 1880s and 1890s
lvertising brand-name consumer items
new genre of magazines, epitomized
y's *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home*
cut subscription rates to attract a mass
ls, of course, were crucial in deliver-
vertising-filled periodicals blanketing
s grew twenty times faster than popu-
1880.[14]

ond-Class Mail Category."
st sess. (1900), 4.
hapter in Marshall Cushing, *The Story of Our Post*
R. Doc. No. 608, 59th Cong., 2d sess. (1907),
cited as Penrose-Overstreet Commission].
Advertising (New York, 1983), 22–38, 136; Bruce
on: Media Structure and the First Amendment (Cam-
nk Presbrey, *The History and Development of Adver-*

The Explosion of Periodicals • The remarkable growth of mass circulation periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries flooded the mails and carriers' mailbags. This overburdened carrier was making his rounds in Portland, Oregon, around 1909. (Reprinted, with permission, from the Jonathan Bourne Collection, CN 1203, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon Library, Eugene, Oregon.)

---

tising (Garden City, N.Y., 1929), 446–84; Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 5 vols. (New York and Cambridge, Mass., 1930–68), 4:3–22; Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 2d ed. (Urbana, Ill., 1964), 1–43; James P. Wood, *The Curtis Magazines* (New York, 1971), esp. 62–80.

The explosive growth of popular magazines intensified competition for advertising among segments of the publishing industry. Rural weeklies and city dailies alike touted their merits as vehicles for promoting nationally available consumer goods, and advertising agencies put together combinations of newspapers to cover key markets throughout the country. The battle for advertising also reflected shifts in the nation's marketing system. Small local retailers who had once served their communities with little competition faced a succession of challengers—department stores, mail-order firms, and chain stores. Rural weeklies and small-city dailies recognized that their fate was partly linked to the vitality of local merchants; the metropolitan press increasingly tied its fortunes to department stores and chains. Magazines were well-positioned to run advertisements for nationally marketed consumer goods sold through all kinds of retail outlets.[15]

Deciding which publications were "designed primarily for advertising purposes," therefore, became a nearly impossible task. Postal officials concentrated on curbing practices commonly used to circumvent regulations governing admission to the subsidized rate. Some publications sent excessive quantities of sample copies to nonsubscribers. For example, the *Appleton* (Wis.) *Post* mailed an extraordinary number of one issue marked "sample" to a list of nonsubscribers furnished by an advertiser. In another case, the Post Office denied the second-class privilege to a publication that issued 20,000 sample copies but had only 1,500 subscribers.[16] Mail-order journals posed another problem. Resembling magazines, these advertising-filled publications devised countless schemes involving discounts, premiums, and clubbing arrangements to give away subscriptions. Publishers compensated for negligible subscription revenue by charging steep advertising rates based on inflated circulations. Yet another target of postal adminis-

[15] Ralph M. Hower, *The History of an Advertising Agency* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), esp. 98, 418–19; George P. Rowell, *Forty Years an Advertising Agent* (New York, 1906); Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 224–35, 290–92; Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*.

The proliferation of publishing and advertising trade journals after 1880 reflected the growing segmentation in the fields. Metropolitan dailies were primarily served by *Editor & Publisher* and the *Fourth Estate*; small-city and rural newspapers by *Publishers' Auxiliary*, *American Press*, and *National-Printer Journalist*; mid-sized newspapers by *Newspaperdom*; the publishing industry broadly by *Publishers' Weekly*; advertisers generally by *Printers' Ink*; national advertisers by the *Mail Order Journal*. For details about these and kindred journals, see Mott, *American Magazines*, 3:273–74, 491–94, 4:243–47, 5:59–71; Quentin J. Schultze, "The Trade Press of Advertising," in *Information Sources in Advertising History*, ed. Richard W. Pollay (Westport, Conn., 1979), 47–62.

[16] 1 *Opinions of the Assistant Attorney General for the Post Office Department* 564–66 (1881); 858–59 (1883) [hereafter cited as *Opinions for the Post Office Department*]; *Postal Laws and Regulations* (1887), 144–45.

magazines intensified competi-
ients of the publishing industry. Rural
ted their merits as vehicles for promot-
er goods, and advertising agencies pur-
papers to cover key markets through-
advertising also reflected shifts in the
all local retailers who had once served
competition faced a succession of
s, mail-order firms, and chain stores.
ilies recognized that their fate was partly
rchants; the metropolitan press increas-
nent stores and chains. Magazines were
isements for nationally marketed con-
l kinds of retail outlets.[15]
ons were "designed primarily for adver-
ecame a nearly impossible task. Postal
ng practices commonly used to circum-
ission to the subsidized rate. Some pub-
ties of sample copies to nonsubscribers.
is.) *Post* mailed an extraordinary num-
ole" to a list of nonsubscribers furnished
ase, the Post Office denied the second-
that issued 20,000 sample copies but
Mail-order journals posed another
hese advertising-filled publications
vc. ing discounts, premiums, and club-
ıy subscriptions. Publishers compensated
venue by charging steep advertising rates
ıs. Yet another target of postal adminis-

'an *Advertising Agency* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), esp.
Years an Advertising Agent (New York, 1906); Alfred
The Managerial Revolution in American Business (Cam-
-92; Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*.
nd advertising trade journals after 1880 reflected the
Metropolitan dailies were primarily served by *Editor*
nall-city and rural newspapers by *Publishers' Auxiliary*,
Journalist; mid-sized newspapers by *Newspaperdom*; the
blishers' Weekly; advertisers generally by *Printers' Ink*;
der Journal. For details about these and kindred jour-
s, 3:273–74, 491–94, 4:243–47, 5:59–71; Quentin J.
rtising," in *Information Sources in Advertising History*, ed.
n., 1979), 47–62.
ney General for the Post Office Department 564–66 (1881);
Opinions for the Post Office Department; *Postal Laws and*

trators was the publication conducted merely as an auxiliary to a business. Firms ranging from agricultural implement manufacturers to insurance companies issued periodicals advertising the owner's products along with a few stories that were little more than disguised promotions for the products.[17] When postal officials detected these attempts to stretch the definition of legitimate second-class matter, they assessed the questionable publications at third-class rates.

Postal Politics and Administration

Postal administrators worked in an institution that was both a bastion of partisan politics and an emerging modern administrative agency. From Andrew Jackson's presidency until 1971, the postmasters general customarily served as the chief political lieutenant of the president, some having headed the party's national committee. Besides overseeing the department, the postmasters general dispensed the administration's spoils—tens of thousands of postmasterships and thousands of contracts throughout the nation. With the advice and consent of the Senate, the White House appointed postmasters for the largest offices (divided into three classes); hence, they became known as presidential postmasters. Ostensibly, the Post Office had a free hand in appointing postmasters in the small offices, by far the most numerous. In practice, however, appointments of the so-called fourth-class postmasters followed the advice of the party's state congressional delegation. The spoils were considerable: in 1902, before civil service covered the positions, there were 4,466 presidential postmasters and 72,479 fourth-class postmasters.[18]

Despite the highly politicized environment of the Post Office Department, key administrators—including many involved in classification decisions—enjoyed an expanding sphere of autonomy in the 1880s and thereafter. Although the original 1883 civil service law applied to relatively few federal employees, it did protect postal clerks at headquarters and in offices with fifty or more clerks. Most clerks sorted mail or performed other mundane tasks, but those in Washington, D.C., and in some larger cities handled administrative functions

[17] S. Doc. No. 89, 56th Cong., 2d sess. (1901), pt. 3: 56–57, 67; *Printers' Ink*, 28 June 1905, 14–18; Mott, *American Magazines*, 4:364–68; *Annual Report of the Post Office* (1908), 28! [hereafter cited as *Annual Report*]. A postal official enumerated the many schemes used in stretching lists of subscribers. See Penrose-Overstreet Commission, 30–31, 51–80.

[18] Dorothy G. Fowler, *The Cabinet Politician: The Postmasters General, 1829–1909* (New York, 1943); Sterling D. Spero, *The Labor Movement in a Government Industry: A Study of Employee Organization in the Postal Service* (New York, 1927).

such as reviewing applications for second-class mailing permits. In the headquarters bureaucracy, the third assistant postmaster general, a political appointee, supervised the classification clerks. The staff positions thus provided institutional continuity as postmasters general and thousands of postmasters changed with shifting political fortunes.[19]

Initially, any postmaster could grant a second-class permit. "There were almost an endless variety of rulings; for there were almost as many judges as there were postmasters," according to Marshall Cushing. After 1887, however, decision making was centralized in Washington, D.C., where the Classification Division labored to maintain the integrity of the second-class mail privilege. Under an 1885 opinion of the Post Office solicitor, publishers had to provide local postmasters with sworn answers to a series of questions (nineteen by 1902, some with several parts). Most delved into a periodical's business practices to ascertain whether it disseminated information of a public character or was primarily intended for advertising purposes. For instance, publishers had to provide details about ownership, their other businesses and how they related to the publication, advertising practices, and subscription terms—a rather extensive inquiry by federal officials into the conduct of private enterprises. Applying the criteria set forth in *Postal Laws and Regulations*, postmasters determined whether to issue a provisional second-class mailing permit. The application, affidavit, sample copies, and other evidence were then forwarded to the Classification Division in Washington, D.C., for a final decision about admissibility. Difficult decisions and appeals were referred to the solicitor (also known as the assistant attorney general) for the department. His published opinions, along with the *Postal Laws and Regulations* compiled by the headquarters staff, built a corpus of Post Office administrative law. A monthly *United States Official Postal Guide* also communicated rulings, orders, and sundry information to the nation's widely scattered postal staff. Procedures for classifying mail were thus highly centralized in the hands of a professional staff, counterbalancing the inexperienced politician-postmasters who headed the thousands of offices throughout the nation.[20]

A principal figure behind stricter application of mail classification standards was third assistant postmaster general Edwin C. Madden,

[19] Ross A. McReynolds, "History of the United States Post Office, 1607–1931" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1935), 391–459; Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era, 1869–1901: A Study in Administrative History* (New York, 1958), 257–77.

[20] Cushing, *Our Post Office*, 111, 372–73, 411–15, quote at 411; Lloyd M. Short, *The Development of National Administrative Organization in the United States* (Urbana, Ill., 1923), 344–57; *Postal Laws and Regulations* (1902), 198–203; 2 *Opinions for the Post Office Department* 72–74 (1885).

GEORGETOWN UNIV. LIBRARY

:cond-class mailing permits. In the
rd assistant postmaster general,
classification clerks. The staff post
ntinuity as postmasters general and
with shifting political fortunes.[1]
rant a second-class permit. "There
ings; for there were almost as many
" according to Marshall Cushing,
king was centralized in Washing-
ı Division labored to maintain the
privilege. Under an 1885 opinion,
ers had to provide local postmasters
uestions (nineteen by 1902, some
ıto a periodical's business practices
ed information of a public charac-
ıdvertising purposes. For instance,
ıbout ownership, their other busi-
publication, advertising practices,
xtensive inquiry by federal officials
rises. Applying the criteria set forth
sters determined whether to issue
mit. The application, affidavit,
e then forwarded to the Clas-
ı, C., for a final decision about
ıd appeals were referred to the soli-
torney general) for the department.
ith the *Postal Laws and Regulations*
aff, built a corpus of Post Office
nited States Official Postal Guide also
l sundry information to the nation's
edures for classifying mail were thus
a professional staff, counterbalanc-
postmasters who headed the thou-
nation.[20]

ter application of mail classification
master general Edwin C. Madden,

United States Post Office, 1607–1931" (Ph.D.
459; Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era,*
ry (New York, 1958), 257–77.
, 411–15, quote at 411; Lloyd M. Short, *The*
ization in the United States (Urbana, Ill., 1923),
198–203; 2 *Opinions for the Post Office Depart-*

who served from 1899 to 1907 under five postmasters general. The forty to forty-five clerks in his Classification Division issued two to five hundred decisions, instructions, and answers daily for postmasters, publishers, and citizens throughout the country. As the workload increased, Madden appointed a superintendent of classification and a few special agents to oversee the clerks. For the most part, these special agents remained in their posts as the postmasters general came and went, thereby solidifying the institutional commitment to fight abuses of the second-class mail privilege.[21]

Frustrated by long-standing abuses of the second class, and emboldened by some sentiment for postal reform in Congress, Madden issued regulations in 1901 that epitomized the expanding scope of administrative discretion. One regulation, only partly successful in its aims, limited publishers to sending a maximum of one sample copy for each subscriber. Another limited the use of premiums to induce subscriptions. Most successful was the ruling that paperbound books issued periodically as part of a series no longer qualified for the inexpensive second-class rates. This was a particularly bold move for the agency, because Congress had declined to act after considering the same remedy.[22] Affected mailers protested the administrative initiatives. "Having failed repeatedly in its attempt to secure the legislation desired, the department has now arrogated to itself the right to gain its ends by arbitrary rulings calculated to cover the points which Congress has repeatedly refused to grant through legislation," *The Arena* complained.[23] Houghton, Mifflin & Company challenged the book ruling in a 1904 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Houghton v. Payne.* Acknowledging that the rule reversed the department's own precedent and accomplished administratively what Congress had refused to do legislatively, the Court nonetheless upheld the Post Office. The case recognized wide boundaries of administrative latitude for the Post Office and, presumably, for other agencies.[24]

As the Post Office added flesh to the statutory framework erected by Congress, it moved toward a central position in the policy-making process. In this respect, the Post Office—the largest federal depart-

[21] *Printers' Ink*, 5 July 1905, 10–19; 15 Feb. 1905, 18–19; Penrose-Overstreet Commission, 47; *Official Register of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1903), 2:4; (1911), 2:11.

[22] *Annual Report* (1901), 782–83; *New York Times*, 18 July 1901, 2. On the controversy over paperback books passing at second-class rates, see Richard B. Kielbowicz, "Mere Merchandise or Vessels of Culture? Books in the Mail, 1792–1942," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82 (2d quarter 1988): 179–86.

[23] "Bureaucracy in America," *Arena* 26 (Dec. 1901): 659–61, quote at 660.

[24] 194 U.S. 88; John E. Semonche, *Charting the Future: The Supreme Court Responds to a Changing Society, 1890–1920* (Westport, Conn., 1978), 174.

ment except during the earliest years of the republic—typified or anticipated features of the modern administrative agency.[25]

Concerns about the Subsidy's Costs and Benefits

Despite its increasingly aggressive application of administrative remedies, the Post Office lacked authority to restructure the underlying second-class policy. It remained for Congress to fix rates and to determine the level and distribution of the subsidy. Between 1900 and 1912, Congress continually investigated postal policies and operations. At first, concerns about postal finances propelled congressional inquiries. Later, however, the issue became enmeshed in Progressive Era partisan skirmishes. Second-class mail policy, in short, became freighted with issues of more general import than simply the business of publishing and advertising.

Representative Eugene F. Loud, a California Republican, launched the first major postal inquiry of the twentieth century. As chairman of the House Post Office Committee, Loud held hearings and issued reports every year from 1896 to 1900, and in 1901 he headed a joint congressional commission. Loud mainly pressed for legislative reforms within the existing policy, but his most notable accomplishment was tactical—forging an alliance between reformers in the Post Office and the "legitimate press." This label, which Loud and others bandied about, implied that policy should and could distinguish between two types of periodicals: those providing public information with some advertising and those providing advertising with some public information.[26]

Chronic Post Office deficits, which many attributed to the below-cost second-class rates, brought forth the Joint Commission of Congress on Second-Class Mail Matter in 1906. Headed by senator Boies Penrose, a Pennsylvania Republican known for his criticisms of popular journalism, and representative Jesse Overstreet, an Indiana Republican, the commission proposed legislation that would limit the schemes

[25] Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York, 1982), esp. 72–78.

[26] Loud's proposals for the second-class mail produced extensive reports and deliberations. See, for example, *Congressional Record*, 54th Cong., 2d sess. (1896–97), 184–87, 306–8, 462–519, 2095–97, 2169–72; S. Rep. No. 1517, 54th Cong., 2d sess. (1897); H.R. Rep. No. 73, 55th Cong., 2d sess. (1898); S. Doc. No. 89, 56th Cong., 2d sess. (1901), pt. 3; E. F. Loud, "A Step Toward Economy in the Postal Service," *Forum* 24 (Dec. 1897): 471–75; William H. Moody, "The Work of the Postal Commission," *Independent* 53 (24 Jan. 1901): 195–98.

f the republic—typified or an
dministrative agency.[25]

ıbsidy's Costs and Benefits

e application of administrative reme
ıority to restructure the underlyin
or Congress to fix rates and to deter
the subsidy. Between 1900 and 1912
d postal policies and operations. A
ces propelled congressional inquiries
e enmeshed in Progressive Era partı
il policy, in short, became freighted
ort than simply the business of pub

ıd, a California Republican, launched
the twentieth century. As chairman
ittee, Loud held hearings and issued
1900, and in 1901 he headed a joint
mainly pressed for legislative reforms
s most notable accomplishment was
een reformers in the Post Office and
which Loud and others bandied
l could distinguish between two
, public information with some
advertising with some public infor-

which many attributed to the below-
forth the Joint Commission of Con-
ter in 1906. Headed by senator Boies
an known for his criticisms of popular
esse Overstreet, an Indiana Republi-
gislation that would limit the schemes

merican State: The Expansion of National Admini
1982), esp. 72–78.
s mail produced extensive reports and delibera
54th Cong., 2d sess. (1896–97), 184–87, 306–8,
1517, 54th Cong., 2d sess. (1897); H.R. Rep.
Doc. No. 89, 56th Cong., 2d sess. (1901), pt.
y in the Postal Service," *Forum* 24 (Dec. 1897):
of the Postal Commission," *Independent* 53 (24

that publishers could use to inflate subscription lists. Third Assistant Postmaster General Madden conceded that the statutory language governing admission to the second class was largely unenforceable. A strict construction of the law, he remarked, would exclude from the subsidized rate 60 to 70 percent of the newspapers and an even larger share of magazines. Publishers bristled at this suggestion.[27]

Of greater concern to the press, however, was the Penrose-Overstreet Commission's proposal to cap advertising content and to raise postage. Madden had suggested quadrupling the rate to four cents a pound, but the commission recommended a more modest hike that would vary according to the weight of each piece. To underscore the futility of determining whether a magazine was designed primarily or incidentally for advertising purposes, the commission quoted an advertising agent:

> There is still an illusion to the effect that a magazine is a periodical in which advertising is incidental. But we don't look at it in that way. A magazine is simply a device to induce people to read advertising. It is a large booklet with two departments—entertainment and business. The entertainment department finds stories, pictures, verses, etc., to interest the public. The business department makes the money.

The commission suggested a simple rule to avoid inquiries into a publication's character: periodicals consisting of more than 50 percent advertising would be relegated to the third class.[28]

Although press opposition forced the commission to retreat from most of its proposals, this round of deliberations emboldened the Post Office to tighten several rules. The revised regulations fell most heavily on mail-order journals, some of which ceased publication after the orders took effect. Madden's successor as third assistant postmaster general, A. L. Lawshe, curried support among "legitimate" publications before the department acted.[29] "Speaking for the Postmaster-General, as well as for myself," he said, "I may say that legitimate publishers have nothing to fear from the present administration of the Post-Office Department." Legitimate publishers "do not attempt, by questionable practices, unlawful subterfuges, and covert methods,

[27] The hearings, findings and legislative recommendations are in Penrose-Overstreet Commission. For the press's reaction, see, for example, *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 1907, 5; 2 Feb. 1907, 5; *Printers' Ink*, 13 Feb. 1907, 47–48.

[28] Penrose-Overstreet Commission, vii–lxiii, 129, 500, 523; James H. Collins quoted in ibid., xxxvii.

[29] *Publishers' Weekly*, 9 Feb. 1907, 679; Order no. 907, 4 Dec. 1907, Miscellaneous Orders of the Postmaster General, 12:311–26 (U.S. Postal Service Library); *New York Times*, 7 Dec. 1907, 8; Mott, *American Magazines*, 4:368; *Fame: A Journal for Advertisers*, March 1909, 58; 4 *Opinions for the Post Office Department* 613–15 (1907); *Printers' Ink*, 23 Oct. 1907, 28–29.

to evade a reasonable construction of the law excluding from the pound rate publications designed primarily for advertising purposes, for free circulation or for circulation at nominal rates." Lawshe took pains to show Congress that most newspapers supported the Post Office's action.[30]

Besides stimulating the Post Office to apply administrative remedies, the Penrose-Overstreet Commission triggered a series of inquiries into the cost of the mail service. This resurrected a long-simmering dispute between the Post Office and the press: determining the size of the subsidy, if one existed at all. To inform the deliberations of the Penrose-Overstreet Commission, Congress directed the Post Office to weigh all regular second-class matter from 1 July through December 1906. The commission, however, found the data wanting in precision. It urged Congress to authorize another study that analyzed operating expenses using new data on the weight, number of pieces, and average length of haul for each mail class. In keeping with the spirit of scientific management then infusing government operations, the commission further recommended that accountants and statisticians from outside the Post Office examine the department's business operations.[31]

The Taft Administration, Magazines, and Muckrakers

Armed with data from these studies, the newly elected president, William H. Taft, launched a campaign for higher second-class rates. The campaign stemmed, at least initially, from his desire to improve administrative practices, a part of the Progressives' agenda that coincided with his belief that government could profit from an infusion of business principles. On entering office, Taft secured congressional authorization to organize what became the Commission on Economy and Efficiency. Taft hoped that the commission's findings would bring some organizational rationalization to the cumbersome federal bureaucracy and enhance presidential management through the creation of a budget office.[32] Taft naturally looked to the Post Office as the site for some immediate reforms. Of the $89.4 million deficit he

[30] S. Doc. No. 204, 60th Cong., 1st sess. (1908), 5; S. Doc. No. 270, 60th Cong., 1st sess. (1908), 21–43.

[31] H.R. Doc. No. 651, 59th Cong., 2d sess. (1906); Penrose-Overstreet Commission, xlv–l.

[32] Peri E. Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency: Comprehensive Reorganization Planning, 1905–1980* (Princeton, N.J., 1986), 26–51; Skowronek, *New American State*, 174–75, 187–94.

- law excluding from the pound
advertising purposes, for free
ominal rates." Lawshe took pains
papers supported the Post Office's

ffice to apply administrative reme-
ission triggered a series of inquiries
This resurrected a long-simmering
id the press: determining the size
ll. To inform the deliberations of
, Congress directed the Post Office
atter from 1 July through Decem-
er, found the data wanting in pre-
rize another study that analyzed
on the weight, number of pieces,
h mail class. In keeping with the
infusing government operations,
ded that accountants and statisti-
examine the department's busi-

agazines, and Muckrakers

newly elected president, Wil-
igher second-class rates. The
from his desire to improve
ie Progressives' agenda that coin-
nt could profit from an infusion
office, Taft secured congressional
came the Commission on Econ-
the commission's findings would
ation to the cumbersome federal
al management through the cre-
rally looked to the Post Office as
. Of the $89.4 million deficit he

(1908), 5; S. Doc. No. 270, 60th Cong.,

. (1906); Penrose-Overstreet Commission,

sidency: Comprehensive Reorganization Plan-
; Skowronek, *New American State*, 174–75,

had inherited, about 30 percent was due to postal operations, and the department employed the largest share of federal employees.[33]

The first Post Office annual report produced by the Taft administration clearly pointed to the second class as the place to effect fiscal reforms. For the year ending 30 June 1909, the department delivered 723 million pounds of second-class matter paying the pound rate, which cost an estimated $73 million but yielded only $9 million in receipts. Postmaster general Frank H. Hitchcock claimed that second-class matter constituted 63 percent of all domestic mail but earned only 5 percent of the department's revenues. Letter postage offset most of the shortfall caused by the second class, leaving the Post Office with a deficit of $17.5 million.[34]

Taft used his 1909 State of the Union message to recommend a rate increase for the second class. The administration stopped short of mentioning a specific rate, but it broached several possibilities. Magazines typically traveled much farther than daily newspapers (an average of 1,049 versus 291 miles), which suggested higher postage on the former. The average length of haul varied among all publications, which suggested a zone system—postage graduated according to distance. And publications carried different proportions of advertising, with magazines generally having a higher ratio of advertising to reading matter, hinting that advertising lineage could become the basis for assessing postage. These proposals, alone and in various combinations, set the agenda for discussion for the next eight years.[35]

The House Post Office Committee opened hearings in January 1910 that pitted the Post Office Department against various branches of the publishing industry and allied labor unions. Among the few voices registering approval of a postage increase were chambers of commerce and other business groups; as heavy users of first-class mail, they objected to subsidizing the circulation of periodicals.[36] Magazines, especially *Collier's* and *Outlook*, condemned the president's rate hike as unwarranted and punitive. They took pains to dispute the

[33] Figures are for the year ending 30 June 1908. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C., 1960), 496, 711.

[34] *Annual Report* (1909), 7–10, 30–34, 313.

[35] Taft, "First Annual Message," 7 Dec. 1909, *The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents*, ed. Fred L. Israel (New York, 1966), 3:2362–63; *Annual Report* (1909), 7–10, 30–33.

[36] *Second-Class Mail: Hearings Before the House Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads*, 61st Cong., 2d sess. (1910); U.S. Post Office Department, *Summary of the Department's Reply to the Periodical Publishers Association of America Regarding Second-Class Mail* (Washington, 1910); *New York Times*, 29 Jan. 1910, 3; *Publishers' Weekly*, 5 Feb. 1910, 849–50. For petitions to Congress, see House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, 61A–H28.4, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, RG 233 (National Archives) [hereafter cited

charge that the low second-class rates conferred a subsidy.[37] Other publications, appealing to readers' self-interest, urged action. "The new rate may be eight times as much," one fashion magazine warned. "Any such increase will be a direct tax upon you of 25 cents to $2.00 per year upon each periodical you take, according to its frequency of issue and weight. This nefarious tax, this extortion for the benefit of railroads and express monopolies, can be prevented if *you* act at once." The magazine encouraged readers to write directly to the chairman of the House Post Office Committee and to "get all signatures possible (of persons over 18) to petition below and send to Popular Fashions, Springfield, Mass., within 3 days, so we can forward it to Congress."[38]

As the debate unfolded, newspapers and magazines charged Taft with using the rate hike to retaliate for his administration's bad press. Taft was still smarting from press criticism of his stand on the Payne-Aldrich tariff, which, among other consequences, affected the price of newsprint. More generally, Taft, awkward in his dealings with the press, had the misfortune to follow Theodore Roosevelt, a consummate publicist. And the administration's focus on magazines in its critique of the second-class rate structure raised suspicions that Taft's ulterior motive was to punish hostile muckraking journals. In a March 1910 letter, Taft chastised publications generally—and two muckraking magazines in particular—for their hypocrisy. "They [the publications] have shown themselves just exactly as selfish as the interests which they have attacked, and I propose to have justice done. If we wish to contribute a subsidy of fifty millions to the education of the country, I can find a good deal . . . better method of doing it than by the circulation of *Collier's Weekly* and *Everybody's Magazine*."[39]

Suspicions about the administration's motives were heightened

---

as House Records]; and Senate Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, 61A-J79, Records of the U.S. Senate, RG 46 (National Archives) [hereafter cited as Senate Records]. But for statements supporting a rate hike, see *Fame*, Jan. 1910, 267–68, 278–79; Charles William Burrows, "Second-Class Mail Rates," *Yale Review* 19 (Aug. 1910): 159–67.

[37] "Is the Outlook Subsidized?" *Outlook* 93 (25 Dec. 1909): 894–96; Robert J. Collier, "Collier's and the Post-Office," *Collier's* 44 (29 Jan. 1910): 7; "Let Us Have a Postal Investigation," *Hampton's* 24 (Feb. 1910): 297–98; "The Magazines Rally to Defense of Their Postal Rights," *American Press* 50 (March 1910): 90–91.

[38] "Sign This Protest Against the New Tax," petition to House Post Office Committee [c. Jan. 1910], 61A-H28.4, House Records; the clipping is attached to a petition with signatures. This file contains hundreds of petitions on the proposed rate hike.

[39] Taft to Otto Bannard, president of the New York Trust Company, 2 March 1910, quoted in Donald F. Anderson, *William Howard Taft* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1973), 210. See also George Juergens, *News from the White House: The Presidential-Press Relationship in the Progressive Era* (Chicago, Ill., 1981), 106–20, 289n97; see also James E. Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press* (New York, 1947), 601–29.

lass rates conferred a subsidy.[37] Oth
ders' self-interest, urged action. "Th
much," one fashion magazine warned
irect tax upon you of 25 cents to $2.0
l you take, according to its frequenc
rious tax, this extortion for the bene
opolies, can be prevented if *you* act
ged readers to write directly to the cha
: Committee and to "get all signature
to petition below and send to Popul
within 3 days, so we can forward it to

ıewspapers and magazines charged Taft
dliate for his administration's bad press
ess criticism of his stand on the Payne
other consequences, affected the price
Taft, awkward in his dealings with the
ollow Theodore Roosevelt, a consum-
inistration's focus on magazines in its
e structure raised suspicions that Taft's
ıostile muckraking journals. In a March
ɔlications generally—and two muckrak
- rheir hypocrisy. "They [the publica
exactly as selfish as the interests
ı .opose to have justice done. If we
ɔf fifty millions to the education of the
al . . . better method of doing it than
Weekly and *Everybody's Magazine*."[39]
ıinistration's motives were heightened

ee on Post Office and Post Roads, 61A-J79, Records
rchives) [hereafter cited as Senate Records]. But for
Fame, Jan. 1910, 267–68, 278–79; Charles William
Yale Review 19 (Aug. 1910): 159–67.
tlook 93 (25 Dec. 1909): 894–96; Robert J. Collier,
44 (29 Jan. 1910): 7; "Let Us Have a Postal Inves-
97–98; "The Magazines Rally to Defense of Their
ırch 1910): 90–91.
ew Tax," petition to House Post Office Committee
ords; the clipping is attached to a petition with sig-
f petitions on the proposed rate hike.
he New York Trust Company, 2 March 1910, quoted
nd Taft (Ithaca, N.Y., 1973), 210. See also George
he Presidential-Press Relationship in the Progressive Era
see also James E. Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*

when Taft's December 1910 State of the Union message renewed the call for a rate hike. This proposal would have quadrupled postage on the advertising portions of larger magazines.[40] Its timing—the proposal was introduced shortly after the congressional elections but only a month before the end of the Sixty-first Congress—lent support to those who viewed it as retribution for Taft's electoral setbacks. The mid-term elections, which unseated many conservative Republicans and brought a Democratic majority to the House for the first time since 1894, augured poorly for Taft. The president and his allies blamed the press, particularly magazines, for the party's reversals. "They [magazines] have been responsible for bringing defeat to the Republican Party and disaster to the country," Montana senator Thomas H. Carter charged. "We will give 'em an increase in postage and see how they like it. They have been enjoying a good thing too long."[41]

Taft's postal reform made no headway on Capitol Hill. Telegrams from publishers poured into Congress, some offering reasoned arguments, others simply pleading for help: "For Gods [*sic*] sake kill amendment increasing Postage rate on advertising matter in periodicals," the *New York Medical Journal* implored a Republican senator from New Jersey.[42] More important, a formidable bloc in Congress lined up against Taft's proposal. Insurgent Republicans such as Jonathan R. Bourne of the Senate Post Office Committee, along with Progressive Democrats, viewed the rate hike as an attempt to silence muckraking magazines critical of Taft. Not coincidentially, the Progressive lawmakers' loose alliance with muckraking journals, which they used for popularizing their reform agenda, reached its zenith around 1910.[43]

[40] Taft, "Second Annual Message," 6 Dec. 1910, *State of the Union Messages*, 3:2405; *Publishers' Weekly*, 5 Nov. 1910, 1731–32; "An Unfair and Unwise Move to Raise Second-Class Rates," *American Press* 52 (March 1911): 71; "An Unpopular Rider," ibid., 104; Frank A. Munsey, "The Magazine Postage Problem," *Munsey's* 45 (April 1911): 14–18.

[41] Carter quoted in Arthur W. Dunn, *From Harrison to Harding, 1888–1921* (New York, 1922), 137. See also Anderson, *William Howard Taft*, 205–35.

[42] *New York Medical Journal* to John Kean, 11 Feb. 1911, 61A-J79, Senate Records. This file, as well as 61A-H28.4, House Records, contains dozens of other telegrams, mainly from advertising firms, national magazines, and allied interests. See also *Fourth Estate*, 25 Feb. 1911, 3, 13; *Newspaperdom*, 23 Feb. 1911, 10–11. The rather short life of this proposal can be traced in *Congressional Record*, 61st Cong., 3d sess. (1911), 3849, 4044–105, 4334; S. Doc. No. 820, 61st Cong., 3d sess. (1911); S. Doc. No. 841, 61st Cong., 3d sess. (1911); Lewis H. Haney, "Magazine Advertising and the Postal Deficit," *Journal of Political Economy* 19 (April 1911): 338–43.

[43] B. F. Simmons to Bourne, 18 Feb. 1911; Bourne to Simmons, n.d., Second-Class Mail File, box 26, Bourne Papers (University of Oregon Library); James Holt, *Congressional Insurgents and the Party System, 1909–1916* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); Kenneth W. Hechler, *Insurgency: Personalities and Politics of the Taft Era* (New York, 1940), esp. 13; David P. Thelen, *Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit* (Boston, Mass., 1976), 75–76.

To salvage something tangible from the 1910–11 deliberations, Taft agreed to yet another investigation of second-class mail costs. Senator Penrose, who had chaired the 1906–7 commission, half-heartedly offered this solution but believed that it would do little good. "A quarter of a million dollars has been spent in the last few years in these investigations," Penrose said, adding that all the necessary data had long since been amassed and analyzed. Supreme Court justice Charles Evans Hughes reluctantly agreed to head the commission, and he was joined by Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell and Chicago businessman Harry A. Wheeler, soon to become the first president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.[44] The Hughes Commission held hearings in New York City and Washington, D.C., but devoted most of its energy to reanalyzing data already generated. Undertaking the most sophisticated cost ascertainment to date, the commission found that the Post Office spent about 5.5 cents for each pound of second-class matter it handled, excluding overhead expenses that could not be assigned to one class or another. The commission rejected various proposals for restructuring the second-class rate schedule, including a surcharge on advertising and zoned postage, in favor of doubling the postage to two cents a pound. Despite the commission's compelling evidence, Congress did not rush to embrace a rate hike on newspapers and magazines in a presidential election year.[45]

When it was too late, Taft realized the political folly of antagonizing the press. "It was not necessary for me to run amuck [*sic*] among the magazines and attempt to curtail the profit they made in the transportation of their products at an unconscionable low rate," Taft observed bitterly after his 1912 defeat.[46] Although the leading student of Taft's press relations believes that the president pushed for the postage increase "out of desire to get back at those who had treated him badly," Taft in fact was impelled by more than personal animus.[47] The drive to reform the second-class rate structure fit squarely with Taft's broader agenda to overhaul the federal budgetary process and administrative practices. Politics doubtless colored Taft's plans, but

[44] *Congressional Record*, 61st Cong., 3d sess. (1911), 4334, quote at 4089; Joint Resolution 16, 36 Stat. 1458 (1911); *Publishers' Weekly*, 4 March 1911, 1103–4, 1107; 11 March 1911, 1207–8; *Printers' Ink*, 16 March 1911, 30; "Big Politics Versus the Magazines," *Hampton's* 26 (April 1911): 521–23.

[45] H.R. Doc. No. 559, 62d Cong., 2d sess. (1912), 53–151, esp. 137–48; the commission's papers and exhibits are in 62A-F30.1, House Records; "Doubling the Postal Tax on Print," *Literary Digest* 44 (9 March 1912): 468.

[46] Taft to Otto Bannard, 11 Nov. 1912, quoted in Anderson, *William Howard Taft*, 211.

[47] Juergens, *News from the White House*, 118.

WASHBURN UNIV. LIBRARY

n the 1910–11 deliberations
second-class mail costs. Sc
1906–7 commission, half-heartedly
d that it would do little good.
en spent in the last few years in the
ding that all the necessary data had
yzed. Supreme Court justice Charle
to head the commission, and he w
wrence Lowell and Chicago busines
ecome the first president of the U.S.
Hughes Commission held hearings
con, D.C., but devoted most of its
y generated. Undertaking the mos
to date, the commission found that
cents for each pound of second-class
erhead expenses that could not be
r. The commission rejected various
econd-class rate schedule, including
oned postage, in favor of doubling
id. Despite the commission's com-
not rush to embrace a rate hike on
presidential election year.[45]
lized the political folly of antagoniz-
ary for me to run amuck [*sic*] among
the profit they made in the trans-
nconscionable low rate," Taft
at.[46] Although the leading stu-
lieves that the president pushed for
to get back at those who had treated
lled by more than personal animus.[47]
-class rate structure fit squarely with
al the federal budgetary process and
doubtless colored Taft's plans, but

ess. (1911), 4334, quote at 4089; Joint Resolu
Weekly, 4 March 1911, 1103–4, 1107; 11 March
30; "Big Politics Versus the Magazines," *Hamp*

sess. (1912), 53–151, esp. 137–48; the commis
).1, House Records; "Doubling the Postal Ta
912): 468.
quoted in Anderson, *William Howard Taft*, 211
e, 118.

his objective was part of a decades-old movement to do something about the postal subsidy jealously guarded by the press.

Letter Mailers versus Publishers

Taft's defeat in 1912 and shrinking postal deficits—indeed a surplus in 1913, the first in forty years—temporarily relieved pressure to curtail or revamp the second-class mail privilege.[48] Meanwhile, the postmaster general and mailers who believed that letter postage subsidized the circulation of periodicals kept the issue alive.

The Post Office's 1913 annual report provides a revealing snapshot of the department's importance to the publishing industry and in turn suggests the publishing industry's importance in the dissemination of culture. For the first time, a year's second-class mailings exceeded one billion pounds, enough to fill 26,440 railway cars and about double the volume of ten years before. The department estimated that this total "comprised more than 5,000,000,000 single copies, or approximately 50 copies for each man, woman, and child in the country." Of course, such averages are deceptive; some households probably received several publications by post each week and others received none. Because daily newspapers relied heavily on newsstand sales and delivery by private carriers, the bulk of the periodical mail consisted of weekly newspapers and magazines. Of the 28,707 periodicals authorized to mail at the pound rate, dailies held 2,554 permits; tri- and semiweeklies, 700; weeklies (both newspapers and magazines), 17,190; semimonthlies, 631; monthlies, 5,466; bimonthlies, 281; quarterlies, 1,532; and others, 353. Although second-class matter was mailed from 11,091 post offices, 80 percent of the postage, proportional to weight, was collected in fifty cities. Ten cities—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Des Moines, and St. Paul—accounted for slightly more than half of the second-class mail by weight. Publishers in New York City alone entered 20 percent of the nation's second-class mail; Chicago was second with 9.4 percent.[49]

Woodrow Wilson's postmaster general, Albert S. Burleson, held out a tantalizing possibility in each annual report issued between 1913 and 1916: that raising second-class rates might make it feasible to reduce letter postage. Burleson repeatedly recommended that, at least as a

[48] A small surplus reported for 1911 was actually the result of questionable bookkeeping practices. *Annual Report* (1913), 5–7.

[49] Ibid., 325–28.

No. 738

INTERESTING INFORMATION

After the New Zone Mail Rates on the advertising pages of the magazines are in full effect, magazines carrying 50% reading matter and 50% advertising matter will pay the following rates on entire publication.

	1st-2nd ZONES	3rd ZONE	4th ZONE	5th ZONE	6th ZONE	7th ZONE	8th ZONE	
Will pay	1 3/4	2 1/4	3 1/4	3 3/4	4 1/4	5 1/4	5 3/4	cents per lb.
Cost of distributing them will be	4 23/100	4 36/100	4 98/100	6 11/100	7 36/100	9 36/100	13 36/100	cents per lb.
Still leaving a loss to the department as follows:	2 48/100	2 11/100	1 73/100	2 36/100	3 61/100	4 61/100	8 11/100	cents per lb.

PLEASE WRITE US AND WE WILL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT IT.

National One Cent Letter Postage Association, Cleveland, O.

(OVER) 1519 Guardian Bldg. 627-631 Euclid Avenue.

Lobbying for Higher Periodical Rates · The National One Cent Letter Postage Association distributed many such cards as part of its campaign for higher second-class rates, which it believed would allow for a reduction in first-class postage. (Reprinted from file 182, Records Relating to an Increase in Second-Class Postage Rates, Records of the Post Office Department, RG 28, National Archives.)

first step, Congress double magazine postage. Early in 1914, Congress opened hearings on the postmaster general's plan and heard from the magazine industry and advertisers. Burleson's insistence on linking a reduction in first-class postage with an increase in second-class rates heartened the National One-Cent Letter Postage Association. The association's avowed mission was to secure the reduction of letter postage from two cents, where it had been set in 1883, to one cent an ounce. Like the postmaster general, the association repeatedly asserted that first-class mail subsidized the circulation of periodicals. But the group's hidden purpose, according to advertisers and publishers, was to undercut merchandisers operating nationally. The Letter Postage Association's membership consisted mainly of local retailers, who may have felt threatened by mail-order firms, especially after the introduction of the parcel post in 1913. Businesses also used first-class mail for correspondence, billing, and direct-mail advertising. Although the association failed to secure its central goal, it provided a rallying point for diverse nongovernment interests working to reduce the postal subsidy enjoyed by the press. In 1917 it claimed the support of about one thousand organizations, including many chambers of commerce and business leagues.[50]

[50] Ibid., 28–29; (1914), 31–32; (1915), 35–37; (1916), 31–33; *Rates of Postage on Second-Class Mail: Hearings Before the House Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads*, 63rd Cong.,

UNIV. LIBRARY

G INFORMATION

ates on the advertising pages of
zines carrying 50% reading matter
following rates on entire publication.

5th ZONE 7th ZONE 8th ZONE

$4\frac{1}{4}$ $5\frac{1}{4}$ $5\frac{3}{4}$ cents per lb.

$7\frac{36}{100}$ $9\frac{36}{100}$ $13\frac{36}{100}$ cents per lb.

follows:

$3\frac{51}{100}$ $4\frac{51}{100}$ $8\frac{11}{100}$ cents per lb.

VILL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT IT.

stage Association, Cleveland, O.
627-631 Euclid Avenue.

he National One Cent Letter Postage Associa
ts campaign for higher second-class rates, which
-class postage. Reprinted from file 182, Record
tage Rates, Records of the Post Office Depart

ine postage. Early in 1914, Congress
er general's plan and heard from the
s. Burleson's insistence on linking
an increase in second-class rates
tter Postage Association. The
to secure the reduction of letter
had been set in 1883, to one cent
general, the association repeatedly
lized the circulation of periodicals
according to advertisers and pub-
ers operating nationally. The Letter
consisted mainly of local retailers
ail-order firms, especially after the
913. Businesses also used first-class
d direct-mail advertising. Although
central goal, it provided a rallying
terests working to reduce the postal
17 it claimed the support of about
ling many chambers of commerce

-37; (1916), 31-33; *Rates of Postage on Second-*
on the Post Office and Post Roads, 63rd Cong.,

Congress and the Postal Subsidy

Shortly after the Sixty-fifth Congress convened and the United States entered the First World War, Postmaster General Burleson renewed the postal struggle with a clever gambit—he changed the venue of decision making. Burleson recommended that the House Ways and Means Committee, headed by majority leader Claude Kitchin, a North Carolina Democrat, grapple with second-class rates as part of the omnibus War Revenue Bill. The House passed a bill charging distance-based rates on the entire contents of publications, but the Senate, in contrast, focused on the extent of commercialization exhibited by periodicals seeking the subsidized rate. The conference committee crafted the final version from elements of both plans, and the flat editorial-zoned advertising rate structure was passed as part of the 1917 War Revenue Act.[51]

Throughout the deliberations, Kitchin doggedly pushed for restructured second-class rates and seized the opportunity to inveigh against the press in general and magazines in particular. The Ways and Means Committee unanimously backed the proposal, Kitchin told the House, with "no hesitancy, no reluctance, no doubt as to the propriety and the right to materially increase the rate on the second-class mail matter." Publishers alone among manufacturers expected the government to pay the cost of transporting their products, Kitchin complained. The below-cost second-class rate "is a clear subsidy to the publishers—a clear, legalized robbery by them of the people of $89,000,000." Three Curtis Publishing Company magazines enjoyed a public subvention of $4.7 million a year, and the *New York Times* paid only one-fifth of the cost of mailing its ten million pounds of newspapers a year, he said. In the conference committee, House members, led by Kitchin, threatened to hold up passage of the War Revenue Bill unless it contained a rate hike for publishers. Kitchin also insisted that deliberations be kept confidential to discourage publishers' lobbyists.[52]

2d sess. (1914); *Fourth Estate*, 14 Feb. 1914, 2; *Mail Order Journal*, March 1914, 13; *Printers' Ink*, 19 Feb. 1914, 17–26. See also the file on the One-Cent Letter Postage Association, National Philatelic Collection (Smithsonian Institution); *Mail Order Journal*, April 1913, 20; Press Release, 14 April 1913, Post Office Department Press Releases (U.S. Postal Service Library); *One-Cent Drop-Letter Postage: Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads*, 64th Cong., 2d sess. (1917).

[51] Burleson to Kitchin, 12 April 1917, Records Relating to an Increase in Second-Class Postage Rates, file 182, Records of the Post Office Department, RG 28 (National Archives) [hereafter cited as file 182, POD Records].

[52] The House debate on the postal provisions of the War Revenue Bill occurred mainly in May and September 1917. See *Congressional Record*, 65th Cong., 1st sess. (1917), 2148–49,

The Senate, less willing to alienate publishers, initially rejected any postage increase, but a plan put forward by Georgia Democrat Thomas W. Hardwick and backed by the Post Office influenced the conference committee. Hardwick proposed raising postage on the advertising contents of publications over three years until it reached eight cents a pound, the approximate cost of handling second-class mail. Reading matter, in contrast, would continue to enjoy the highly subsidized rate of one cent a pound. Both rates would remain flat—that is, not vary by distance. He argued that distributing advertising-filled periodicals at subsidized rates enriched publishers more than it enriched the nation's intellectual and cultural life. He presented evidence on publications' circulation by mail, postage thereon, percent of advertising, income from advertising, cost of paper, and subscribers' contributions to revenue (see Table 1). Subscribers to the *Saturday Evening Post*, for example, paid $1.50 a year to receive the Curtis publication, but, by Post Office estimates, the company reaped $6.73 in advertising per subscription. Issues averaged about a pound apiece and ordinarily contained 50 to 60 percent advertising; businesses paid $5,000 to purchase a full page. A surcharge for advertising contents would reflect the private benefits that publishers realized from using the public posts, Hardwick explained, and the low editorial rate would honor the nation's venerable commitment to foster the dissemination of public information.[53]

At first, publishers presented a united front in opposition to any plan that would zone postage or impose higher rates on advertising. "For all the differences of opinion aired by the publishers in private they made common cause right nobly when they finally faced the Senate Finance Committee," the *Fourth Estate* reported.[54] When some rate hike appeared inevitable, however, underlying fissures in the publishing industry widened. Magazines, dependent on the mails to reach

---

2352–58, 2408, 2773–77, 2813–19, 7557–73, 7585, 7597–98; Kitchin quoted in ibid., 488–90. See also the trade journals *Mail Order Journal*, *Editor & Publisher*, *Publishers' Auxiliary*, *Fourth Estate*, and *Printers' Ink* for those two months. On the major House players, see Alex M. Arnett, *Claude Kitchin and the Wilson War Policies* (Boston, Mass., 1937); Randall B. Ripley, *Party Leaders in the House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C., 1967), 25–27, 42; Charles Gilbert, *American Financing of World War I* (Westport, Conn., 1970), 82–93.

[53] *Revenue to Defray War Expenses: Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Finance*, 65th Cong., 1st sess. (1917), 633–58; First Assistant Postmaster General John C. Koons to Hardwick, 23 May 1917, file 182, POD Records; Memorandum for Senator Hardwick, n.d., ibid; *Congressional Record*, 6354–56, 6399–6416, 7606–33; *Editor & Publisher*, 18 Aug. 1917, 6; *Fourth Estate*, 25 Aug. 1917, 2, 5, 23.

[54] *Fourth Estate*, 19 May 1917, 2, 10–11; *Editor & Publisher*, 19 May 1917, 5, 6, 16; *Revenue to Defray War Expenses*, 223–42, 408–84, 639–57; *Printers' Ink*, 10 May 1917, 109–13; 17 May 1917, 62–72; *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 19 May 1917, 1, 4.

o alienate publishers, initially rejected
ut forward by Georgia Democrat Thom
y the Post Office influenced the con
proposed raising postage on the adve
s over three years until it reached e
nate cost of handling second-class m
would continue to enjoy the highly s
und. Both rates would remain flat—th
rgued that distributing advertising-fil
enriched publishers more than it enrich
cultural life. He presented evidence
mail, postage thereon, percent of adve
ng, cost of paper, and subscribers' co
ble 1). Subscribers to the *Saturday Eve*
50 a year to receive the Curtis publicatio
the company reaped $6.73 in adverti
eraged about a pound apiece and ordina
nt advertising; businesses paid $5,00
rcharge for advertising contents woul
publishers realized from using the publi
nd the low editorial rate would hono
ent to foster the dissemination of pub

united front in opposition to an
or impose higher rates on advertising
nion aired by the publishers in privat
ght nobly when they finally faced the
he *Fourth Estate* reported.[54] When som
owever, underlying fissures in the pub
azines, dependent on the mails to reach

57–73, 7585, 7597–98; Kitchin quoted in ibid.
Order Journal, *Editor & Publisher*, *Publishers' Ass*
those two months. On the major House players
e Wilson War Policies (Boston, Mass., 1937); Randall
resentatives (Washington, D.C., 1967), 25–27, 42;
World War I (Westport, Conn., 1970), 82–93.
rings Before the Senate Committee on Finance, 65th
istant Postmaster General John C. Koons to Hard-
rds; Memorandum for Senator Hardwick, n.d.,
-6416, 7606–33; *Editor & Publisher*, 18 Aug. 1917,

Editor & Publisher, 19 May 1917, 5, 6, 16; *Revenue*
639–57; *Printers' Ink*, 10 May 1917, 109–13; 17
19 May 1917, 1, 4.

Table 1
Mailing, Advertising, and Subscription Data of Selected Periodicals, 1917

Publication[a]	Freq.	Copies Mailed Per Issue	Postage Paid FY 1916 ($)	Percent Ads	Weight of One Year's Subs. (lbs.)	Ad Income Per Annual Subs.	Annual Subs. Rate ($)
POPULAR MAGAZINES							
[illegible] Magazine	mthly	363,497	36,786	52	10.1	1.62	1.50
[illegible]	wkly	729,032	189,548	46	26.0	3.92	2.50
[illegible]	mthly	358,344	34,939	33	9.8	.36	1.50
[illegible] Home Journal	mthly	976,478	159,449	55	16.3	3.37	1.50
[illegible] Digest	wkly	278,891	92,731	51	33.3	4.44	3.00
[illegible]	mthly	304,129	25,851	46	8.5	1.70	1.50
Saturday Evening Post	wkly	747,228	383,357	54	51.2	6.73	1.50
[illegible]	mthly	67,572	8,427	50	12.5	3.96	3.00
[illegible] Companion	mthly	401,087	40,307	28	8.1	1.06	2.00
SPECIALIZED PUBLICATIONS							
Christian Herald	wkly	302,000	40,175	38	13.2	2.58	2.00
Engineering Record	wkly	15,288	13,759	90	90.0	32.72	5.00
Farm Journal	mthly	1,000,050	38,002	55	3.8	.86	.20
Fourth Estate	wkly	—	—	36	—	—	—
Iron Age	wkly	10,194	11,214	84	110.0	52.00	5.00
Motor Age	mthly	—	—	67	—	—	—
Printers' Ink	wkly	—	—	58	—	—	—

[a] These publications were selected because of their prominence or because they were frequently mentioned in postal debates.

Source: Compiled from tables prepared by the Post Office in *Revenue to Defray War Expenses: Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Finance*, 65th Cong., 1st sess. (1917), 633–58.

their widely dispersed readers, remained most steadfast in opposition to a distance-based rate structure. Their trade group, the Periodical Publishers Association, arranged for members to bombard Congress with telegrams during the gestation of the bill. Farm journals and trade magazines claimed that any measure curtailing the widest dissemination of the latest technical intelligence would impair the nation's productivity during the war. Medical journals, appealing to war-inflamed patriotism, predicted that higher postage would result in continued American dependence on German publications for the latest research findings. Popular magazines editorialized publicly and lobbied behind the scenes against a rate hike. Labor groups maintained that a zone system would cut readership and cost jobs. Publishers threatened to move printing facilities to Chicago or to another cen-

trally located city to minimize costs if the zone system became law.[55]

Newspapers remained in the background during the initial consideration of the bill, perhaps because metropolitan dailies were less dependent on the mails than magazines. Eventually, though, the postal committee of the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) decided that closing ranks with magazine interests was the best strategy to pursue in lobbying Congress. To the chagrin of magazines, however, it became apparent that ANPA's fall-back position was to endorse a zone system, but one with lower rates for mailings within three hundred miles. This would accommodate dailies that mailed a large part of their output, especially the magazine-like Sunday editions, to their rural hinterlands.[56] Small-town newspapers broke ranks with their larger counterparts and endorsed the plan to calibrate postage to distance. It "means less mail-order competition for the local merchants, and less centralization for the merchandizing interests of the large cities," *Publishers' Auxiliary* claimed.[57]

By far the most common warning sounded by the opposition was against the zone proposal's sectionalizing tendencies. All classes of magazines and a few city newspapers invoked this argument. The *New York Evening Mail*, whose very name attests to the centrality of the posts in American journalism, observed, "The magazine and the daily newspaper with a National circulation are the great mediums for the exchange of sentiment on this great continent; . . . for the welding

[55] *Congressional Record*, 2148; *Printers' Ink*, 10 May 1917, 79–83, 109–13; letters and telegrams to representatives, 26 April–17 May 1917, 65A-H14.9, House Records. The various combinations of postage and taxes considered by the Finance Committee can be traced in the June 1917 issues of *Printers' Ink*, *Fourth Estate*, *Publishers' Auxiliary*, and *Editor & Publisher*.

[56] *Printers' Ink*, 10 May 1917, 109–13; *Newspaperdom*, 10 May 1917, 7; *Fourth Estate*, 12 May 1917, 8, 26; 19 May 1917, 2, 10–11; *Newspaperdom*, 24 May 1917, 4. On the development of feature-filled Sunday editions at this time see Alfred M. Lee, *Daily Newspaper in America* (New York, 1937), 397–403. The rural press's trade journal complained, "There are cities of from ten to twenty thousand people as far as 300 miles from Chicago where there are more Chicago Sunday papers sold than the total circulation of the local daily papers. And this is true because the government has carried the big city papers to those towns at a price that is far below the actual cost of the transportation, and has also provided fast mail trains for the purpose of distributing these big city papers in the shortest possible time." *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 19 May 1917, 4. For discussions of how the urban press penetrated the countryside, see Robert E. Park, "Urbanization as Measured by Newspaper Circulation," *American Journal of Sociology* 35 (July 1929): 60–79; Wayne E. Fuller, *RFD: The Changing Face of Rural America* (Bloomington, Ind., 1964), 291–300.

[57] *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 12 May 1917, 1; *Editor & Publisher*, 21 July 1917, 6; Phil C. Bing, *The Country Weekly* (New York, 1917), 244–45, 266–67, 281. See ibid., 4 Aug. 1917, 18–21, for an advertisement touting the superiority of newspapers over magazines in reaching a national audience: "it's more like neighborhood, intimate, friendly stuff, rather than like an occassional [*sic*] visitor."

osts if the zone system became law
background during the initial con-
ecause metropolitan dailies were less
agazines. Eventually, though, the postal
paper Publishers Association (ANPA)
agazine interests was the best strategy
To the chagrin of magazines, however,
s fall-back position was to endorse a
wer rates for mailings within three
ommodate dailies that mailed a large
the magazine-like Sunday editions,
ll-town newspapers broke ranks with
dorsed the plan to calibrate postage
order competition for the local mer-
r the merchandizing interests of the
ry claimed.[57]
rning sounded by the opposition was
ionalizing tendencies. All classes of
pers invoked this argument. The *New*
name attests to the centrality of the
rved, "The magazine and the daily
n are the great mediums for the
continent; . . . for the welding

k, 10 May 1917, 79–83, 109–13; letters and tel-
ay 1917, 65A–H14.9, House Records. The vari-
sidered by the Finance Committee can be traced
Fourth Estate, *Publishers' Auxiliary*, and *Editor &*

Newspaperdom, 10 May 1917, 7; *Fourth Estate*, 12
Newspaperdom, 24 May 1917, 4. On the develop-
this time see Alfred M. Lee, *Daily Newspaper in*
rural press's trade journal complained, "There
people as far as 300 miles from Chicago where
than the total circulation of the local daily papers.
has carried the big city papers to those towns
of the transportation, and has also provided fast
g these big city papers in the shortest possible
For discussions of how the urban press penetrated
banization as Measured by Newspaper Circula-
1929): 60–79; Wayne E. Fuller, *RFD: The Chang-*
Ind., 1964), 291–300.
Editor & Publisher, 21 July 1917, 6; Phil C. Bing,
–45, 266–67, 281. See ibid., 4 Aug. 1917, 18–21,
rity of newspapers over magazines in reaching a
orhood, intimate, friendly stuff, rather than like

together of the thought and feeling of a widely diversified population, scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific." Second-class postage graduated according to distance, it feared, would create sectional publishing zones in the East, Midwest, and West. "And with three distinct zones of publication we face the prospect of the creation of three distinct zones of thought and feeling. We face the destruction of that great force which we have been striving to create—the force of a united public opinion and a crystallized National sentiment."[58]

Although the War Revenue Act addressed immediate financial needs, its postal provisions capped two decades of effort to restructure the second-class mail subsidy. Reading matter continued to enjoy a highly subsidized flat rate—raised slightly to 1.25 cents a pound on 1 July 1918 and to 1.50 cents a year later. Advertising portions, however, paid higher rates graduated according to distance. The rates rose in four steps every 1 July from 1918 to 1921. When fully effective, the new schedule charged each pound of advertising matter from a minimum of two cents, for 150 or fewer miles, to a maximum of ten cents, for 1,800 or more miles. Since 1885, this same matter had paid one cent a pound. Finally, the War Revenue Act created an especially low rate for the publications of certain nonprofit organizations, a postage advantage such groups still enjoy.[59]

Zoned Postage in the Politics of the Late Progressive Era

Why did the long-debated restructuring of the second-class mail subsidy finally pass in 1917 and in the form of zoned advertising postage? Tacking the postal reform onto emergency wartime legislation undoubtedly facilitated its passage. More important in understanding the particular form it took, though, was the nature of Woodrow Wilson's Progressive coalition in Congress.

Wilson's 1916 electoral victory was built on a coalition that "included progressives of both parties who favored Wilson's reform legislation"; isolationists, pacifists, and immigrants eager to avoid war; "farmers and laborers responding to the administration's growing concern for them; and Southerners long loyal to the Democratic Party,"

[58] *Evening Mail*, quoted in "To Put Periodicals Out of Business," *Outlook* 116 (16 May 1917): 97. See also "The Move to Foster Sectionalism and Hinder Education," *Coal Age* 10 (23 Dec. 1916): 1054; "A Blow at National Unity," *Engineering Record* 74 (23 Dec. 1916): 758–59; "Opposition to Postage Zone System," *Engineering News* 77 (4 Jan. 1917): 36–37; " 'Zone' Postal Rates," *Nation*, 11 Jan. 1917, 38; "The Principle Underlying Newspaper Postage Rates," *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* 105 (22 Sept. 1917): 1143–44.

[59] 40 U.S. Stat. 327–28.

David Burner observes. "Sectionally, the alliance united the rural South and the rural West. . . ."[60] When the Sixty-fifth Congress convened in March 1917, the Democrats enjoyed a comfortable majority in the Senate (56.3 percent) but only a slight edge in the House. Democrats strengthened their hand in the House by appointing powerful congressmen, many of them Southerners, to key committee posts. Zoned advertising postage had a dual appeal for the Wilson coalition: it struck at large, eastern-based periodicals and at publications that seemed to favor American entry into the European war.[61]

As the debate over zoned advertising postage evolved, the rural Democratic majority gradually recognized the long-term benefits of this policy solution. Postage would be raised mainly on national magazines and on a handful of the large urban papers issued from northeastern cities and a few industrial centers in Great Lakes states. This spared their constituents, the rural and small-town press. Moreover, calibrating postage to advertising struck a blow, however slight, against the encroachments of national market institutions. Finally, rural Americans distrustful of the culture purveyed by national magazines embraced this measure as affording some protection. Not surprisingly, the chief congressional proponents of zoned advertising postage represented rural states and districts.[62]

Attitudes toward the war figured in the debate over second-class postage once elements of the press became associated in the popular mind with munitions manufacturers and financiers who stood to benefit from American involvement. This cleavage coincided with the urban-rural split—interventionist sentiment ran highest in the urban Northeast and lowest in the rural Midwest and South. The magazines and eastern newspapers that promoted American entry into the war were branded the "parasite press" by isolationists; indeed, British propagandists used such publications to cultivate interventionist sentiment in the United States. Whatever their editorial position on the war, the leading national magazines appeared guilty by location: the congressional delegations most consistently in favor of American intervention in 1916 represented the trade areas of Philadelphia,

[60] David Burner, "The Breakup of the Wilson Coalition of 1916," *Mid-America* 43 (Jan. 1963): 18; David Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918–1932* (New York, 1968), 3–73; Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform*, 211; Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910–1917* (New York, 1954), 250.

[61] Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789–1989* (New York, 1989), 171–72.

[62] The most vociferous proponents of higher postage on magazines and larger newspapers were Rep. William Gordon of Ohio, Sen. Hardwick of Georgia, Rep. Kitchin of North Carolina, Rep. John A. Moon of Tennessee, and Sen. Atlee Pomerene of Ohio.

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE LIBRARY

nally, the alliance united the rural Sou
Then the Sixty-fifth Congress convene
enjoyed a comfortable majority in th
a slight edge in the House. Democra
e House by appointing powerful con
nerners, to key committee posts. Zone
ppeal for the Wilson coalition: it struc
als and at publications that seemed to
e European war.[61]

advertising postage evolved, the rural
recognized the long-term benefits of
ould be raised mainly on national maga-
large urban papers issued from north-
rial centers in Great Lakes states. This
rural and small-town press. Moreover,
g struck a blow, however slight, against
ial market institutions. Finally, rural
ulture purveyed by national magazines
ding some protection. Not surprisingly,
ts of zoned advertising postage
ts.[62]

igured in the debate over second-class
press became associated in the popular
acturers and financiers who stood to
ment. This cleavage coincided with the
ist sentiment ran highest in the urban
rural Midwest and South. The maga-
hat promoted American entry into the
e press" by isolationists; indeed, Brit-
ublications to cultivate interventionist
s. Whatever their editorial position on
nagazines appeared guilty by location:
most consistently in favor of American
nted the trade areas of Philadelphia,

e Wilson Coalition of 1916," *Mid-America* 43 (Jan.
Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition,
iebe, *Businessmen and Reform*, 211; Arthur S. Link,
1910–1917 (New York, 1954), 250.
Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress,

higher postage on magazines and larger newspapers
en. Hardwick of Georgia, Rep. Kitchin of North
essee, and Sen. Atlee Pomerene of Ohio.

Boston, Buffalo, New York, and Pittsburgh, and most magazines of national import issued from New York, Philadelphia, or Boston.[63] Once the United States declared war, former isolationists such as Kitchin insisted that those who were likely to profit from involvement should bear the cost. According to the *New York Times*, Kitchin told southern colleagues that "since the Northeast had been responsible for the preparedness program, he would see to it that those above the Mason and Dixon line would pay for it in taxes."[64] Zoned advertising postage struck at northern magazines and newspapers, the alleged publicists of the interventionist campaign.

The principal advocate of zoned advertising postage in the cabinet, Postmaster General Burleson, shared many traits with the Wilson coalition in Congress. Burleson came from the South, had represented Texas in the House from 1899 to 1913, and, though conservative on social matters, considered himself a Progressive. While in Congress, Burleson consistently sided with those who believed in using government resources for the benefit of agrarian interests—a record of some import, perhaps, in understanding his later stand on zoned advertising postage. In less guarded moments and at friendly public forums, Burleson repeatedly said that he welcomed a revision in second-class rates that would fall most heavily on national magazines and metropolitan newspapers. And as chief dispenser of the administration's patronage, Burleson was in a strategic position to cultivate congressional support. Although Roosevelt and Taft had brought fourth-class postmasters—the largest block of patronage—into the civil service, Burleson exercised enough discretion in making appointments to reward congressional delegations friendly to the administration. Also, for many legislative matters, Burleson served as the White House's principal liaison with Capitol Hill.[65]

Whatever political motivations lay behind passage of zoned advertising postage, Burleson appreciated this policy solution to a long-standing problem in government-business relations. Retaining a low, flat rate on reading matter enabled publications to continue their historic task of binding a diverse people into one nation, Burleson wrote in his 1917 annual report. But higher, zoned rates on advertis-

[63] Richard F. Bensel, *Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880–1980* (Madison, Wis., 1984).

[64] Richard L. Watson, Jr., "A Testing Time for Southern Congressional Leadership: The War Crisis of 1917–1918," *Journal of Southern History* 44 (Feb. 1978): 3–40, quote at 7.

[65] Adrian Anderson, "President Wilson's Politician: Albert Sidney Burleson of Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 77 (Jan. 1974): 339–54; Address of Burleson to the Annual Convention of the National Hardware Association of the United States, 15 Oct. 1919, book 24, Burleson Papers (Library of Congress).

ing reflected the government's costs in carrying mail from which publishers profited. Advertisements in periodicals now paid rates more closely approaching those charged advertising circulars in the third class, Burleson added. Furthermore, applying parcel post zones to advertising recognized that advertisements, though information, bore some relation to commerce and therefore should be subject to a similar postage schedule.[66]

President Wilson, preoccupied with war matters, remained largely noncommittal about the postal reform. Shortly before signing the War Revenue Act, Wilson indicated that he knew of the earlier government investigations supporting higher second-class postage. "I must believe there are two sides to the question," he wrote to the editor of *Successful Farming*, "and that the conclusions arrived at by these inquiries are worth putting into effect, at any rate to make sure of their results."[67] After Wilson signed the law, publishers pressed the White House to postpone or modify the postal provision. Edward W. Bok, editor of the Curtis Publishing Company's *Ladies' Home Journal*, questioned the equity of imposing the zone system when publications supported the war effort through public service advertising campaigns. Indeed, months before, treasury secretary William McAdoo had warned the president that increasing second-class postage might imperil free publicity for the Liberty Loan drive.[68] When Bok in 1918 asked Wilson to appoint a commission of business leaders—"not a group of non-comprehending Congressmen"—to review the matter, the president exhibited some interest in placating the publishers. "I hate to suggest it," he wrote Burleson, "but perhaps we had better let these men feel that they have never been denied a hearing on anything they chose to suggest."[69]

A Rift between Progressives and the Popular Press

The 1917 postal reform also reflected the paradoxical and evolving relationship between the press and Progressive politicians. In 1910, Progressives had opposed the Taft-initiated proposal for a rate hike.

[66] *Annual Report* (1917), 60–64; *Printers' Ink*, 6 Dec. 1917, 25–28.

[67] Wilson to Edwin T. Meredith, 2 Oct. 1917; see also Meredith to Joseph Tumulty, 1 Oct. 1917, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Link et al. (Princeton, N. J., 1966–), 43:257, 289, 291.

[68] McAdoo to Wilson, 25 Sept. 1917, ibid., 44:257.

[69] Correspondence between Bok and Wilson quoted in Salme J. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace: Edward W. Bok and the Ladies' Home Journal* (Baton Rouge, La., 1979), 128–29.

UNIV. LIBRARY

in carrying mail from which pub-
periodicals now paid rates more
advertising circulars in the third
e, applying parcel post zones to
ments, though information, boo
:fore should be subject to a simil

vith war matters, remained largely
m. Shortly before signing the War
it he knew of the earlier govern-
ner second-class postage. "I must
uestion," he wrote to the editor
e conclusions arrived at by these
fect, at any rate to make sure of
d the law, publishers pressed the
lify the postal provision. Edward
ing Company's *Ladies' Home Jour-*
sing the zone system when publi-
rough public service advertising
reasury secretary William McAdoo
sing second-class postage might
an drive.[68] When Bok in 1918
of business leaders—"not a
gressmen"—to review the matter,
st in placating the publishers. "I
son, "but perhaps we had better
ver been denied a hearing on any-

es and the Popular Press

ted the paradoxical and evolving
l Progressive politicians. In 1910,
-initiated proposal for a rate hike.

Ink, 6 Dec. 1917, 25–28.
1917; see also Meredith to Joseph Tumulty,
ed. Arthur S. Link et al. (Princeton, N. J.,

id., 44:257.
on quoted in Salme J. Steinberg, *Reformer in*
es' Home Journal (Baton Rouge, La., 1979),

By 1917, however, they viewed a similar measure as a welcome reform kindred to the graduated income tax, also a part of the 1917 War Revenue Act.

Through the heyday of the Progressive movement, its theoreticians had naïvely believed that the national media would cultivate a sense of community among all segments of a diverse society, much as the small-town press and face-to-face communication did locally. Mass communication would transcend the geographical and social distances of the modern, industrial United States. In the political realm, Progressive politicians formed an alliance with like-thinking journalists at a time when popular magazines were burgeoning. From about 1903 until the middle of Taft's term, muckraking journalists exposed sundry problems. Progressive lawmakers propounded remedies in the columns of the same journals, and magazines profited handsomely from booming circulations.[70]

The alliance between Progressive politicians and popular magazines began dissolving around 1910. The magazines, flush with advertising, became more conservative after 1912. Even worse, muckraking journalists and Progressive politicians saw ownership of some of their leading outlets change hands. Muckrakers began charging that a group of business conspirators was working to silence journalistic critics by buying magazines. Although historians sympathetic to the muckraking movement have echoed this accusation, the preponderance of evidence suggests otherwise. The editors' lack of business acumen, the saturation of the market with too many similar magazines, and a decline in public interest more likely accounted for the changing ownership of crusading magazines. Whatever the cause, journals of mass circulation grew less inclined to accommodate the Progressives' exposés and political prescriptions. Reform-minded writers and lawmakers increasingly turned to the journals of opinion such as the *New Republic*, the *Independent*, the *Public*, and the *Survey* to put their message before the public, albeit a smaller segment of it.[71]

Signs of the Progressives' shifting view of the press could be seen in the Newspaper Publicity Act, passed as a rider to the 1912 postal appropriations bill. In keeping with Progressives' belief that public scrutiny curbed business abuses, the act made use of the subsidized

[70] Jean B. Quandt, *From the Small Town to the Great Community: The Social Thought of Progressive Intellectuals* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1970) analyzes the central place of communication in the thinking of Progressives.

[71] Michael D. Marcaccio, "Did a Business Conspiracy End Muckraking? A Reexamination," *The Historian* 47 (Nov. 1984): 58–71; Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 118; John A. Thompson, *Reformers and War: American Progressive Publicists and the First World War* (Cambridge, England, 1987), chap. 2; Thelen, *Robert M. La Follette*, 130.

second-class rate conditional on the disclosure of three kinds of information. First, the law prescribed that periodicals publish the names of their owners and stockholders twice a year; this provision addressed the concern that some publications were secretly controlled by interests who used their columns to influence public opinion. Second, the act required that daily newspapers publish a sworn statement attesting to their circulation; these figures—the basis for advertising rates—had been self-reported and long suspect. A more effective remedy, the industry-sponsored Audit Bureau of Circulations, followed two years later. Third, the 1912 law directed editors to label as "advertisement" any material inserted for payment that might be mistaken for a story; this aimed at the widespread practice of disguising advertising as news stories and editorials. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Newspaper Publicity Act, and in slightly modified form these conditions for admission to the second-class mail remain today.[72]

The Progressives who pushed through the 1917 postal reform were of a different outlook than those who rallied to protect the popular press from a rate hike in 1910. Wilson's coalition reflected more of the rural, socially conservative orientation inherited from William Jennings Bryan than the cosmopolitan progressivism predominant several years before. The later Progressives viewed mass circulation magazines as commercial enterprises, just another outgrowth of a national marketing system undeserving of a public subvention. In the course of the 1917 postal deliberations, lawmakers awakened to the reality of modern publishing economics: the largest popular magazines and national trade journals made their money not from disseminating ideas but from delivering readers to marketers. Fat with consumer advertising, the *Saturday Evening Post* was singled out as epitomizing mass circulation magazines. "Commercially, as a magazine that carried national advertising and allied itself with the newest business economics of standardization and national distribution, the *Post* was created to echo and reinforce in its contents the emerging concept of America as a nation unified by the consumption of standardized commodities," according to a penetrating history of the magazine.[73] Similarly, trade journals were seen as offshoots of the industries they served and as beneficiaries of the war-induced manufacturing boom. That *Iron*

[72] Act of Aug. 24, 1912 (Newspaper Publicity Act), 37 Stat. 551; Lewis Publishing Co. v. Morgan, 229 U.S. 288; Charles O. Bennett, *Facts Without Opinion: First Fifty Years of the Audit Bureau of Circulations* (Chicago, Ill., 1965), 3–70. For a thorough discussion of the act's origins and implications, see Linda Lawson, "Truth in Publishing: The Newspaper Publicity Act as Government Regulation of the Press" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1988).

[73] Cohn, *Creating America*, 9.

Age, for example, earned $52 in advertising revenue for each $5 subscription caught the eye of postal reformers (see Table 1). Searching for a way to restructure the second-class mail subsidy, Congress decided on an approach—increasing postage with distance and advertising volume—that resembled the graduated income tax, a long-time legislative favorite of Progressives.[74]

Buttressing the New Law

Heartened by the Senate's lack of enthusiasm for the zone plan, magazines and allied interests campaigned to postpone the law's effective date—1 July 1918—or to scrap it altogether.[75] Various branches of the magazine industry—popular, trade, farm, religious, and medical—along with writers and printing unions, organized the Publishers' Advisory Board to centralize propaganda and lobbying efforts. The board's director, Charles J. Post, a former newspaper and magazine journalist, had served as vice-chairman of the Woodrow Wilson Independent League of California in the 1916 election. Post assembled data and arguments in a detailed pamphlet, coordinated testimony of publishers before congressional committees, encouraged public figures to write about the dangers of the zone system, contributed to magazines himself, and, perhaps above all, instructed readers to petition lawmakers. Post wanted readers to know—and magazines obliged with supportive articles, notices, and graphics—that they would bear the cost of the new postal law.[76] Throughout 1918, dozens if not hundreds of literary and women's clubs as well as individuals asked Congress to repeal the new postal law. Most of the petitioners resided in the Midwest and West, and they argued, as did Post, that the law discriminated against readers far from eastern publishing centers.[77]

[74] John W. Hillje, "New York Progressives and the War Revenue Act of 1917," *New York History* 53 (Oct. 1972): 437–59.

[75] *Fourth Estate*, 6 Oct. 1917, 2, 38, 39; *Editor & Publisher*, 6 Oct. 1917, 6, 26; *Newspaperdom*, 11 Oct. 1917, 3–4; *Fourth Estate*, 13 Oct. 1917, 17.

[76] *Printers' Ink*, 22 Nov. 1917, 28–36, 96–97, 104–7; Will Payne, "Sectionalizing Public Opinion," *Independent* 93 (5 Jan. 1918), 16; Rex Beach, "Chopping Up Our Country: The True Story of a Shameful Piece of Legislation Which Every Magazine Reader Should Know," *McClure's* 50 (Jan. 1918): 22, 63; Charles J. Post, *Some Postal Economics With Special Reference to the Postal Zone System* (New York, 1918); *Printers' Ink*, 6 June 1918, 130–39; Jesse H. Neal, executive secretary, Associated Business Papers, to Kitchin, 15 July 1918, H65A-F29.1, House Papers; "Postage and National Unity," *Outlook* 116 (17 July 1918): 447–48; *Revenue Act of 1918: Postal Rates: Hearings Before the House Committee on Ways and Means*, 65th Cong., 2d sess. (1918), pt. 3:1711–2242.

[77] See petitions to the Senate, Jan.-Dec. 1918, 65A-K6, Senate Records; and to the House, May 1917–Jan. 1919, H65A-H14.9, House Records.

READERS' DEFENSE LEAGUE

To Safeguard the Interest of Magazine Readers

Circulated by
(Address)........

STRANGLING THE PERIODICALS

CONGRESS at its last session passed a hasty postal law increasing the postage on periodicals from FIFTY TO NINE HUNDRED PER CENT through a "zone" system.

The unfair "zone" system was abolished by President Lincoln in 1863 because of its unjust discriminations.

Some periodicals will be killed—all will be restricted in circulation and crippled. There will be fewer readers, and the habit of reading curtailed. The great function of periodicals is to assist in the spread of ideas—by printing the achievements in the world of thought, culture, and science.

Thus to shut out farm journals—as these zones rates will—will lessen the productive power of our country by millions of dollars through loss of better methods. Shut off trade journals and you decrease the manufacturing power by more millions. Shut off the religious papers and there are shut off channels that have raised millions of dollars for distressed humanity. Shut off the great periodicals of the home and there is throttled an avenue that has given expert instruction to hundreds of thousands of mothers and saved their babies to health and citizenship.

These national periodicals are printed in the big cities—and the first zone, the cheapest zone, is in or near those cities; there are many educational opportunities near cities, and the cities will read anyway. Small towns and distant districts depend to a large extent upon periodicals; thus this law increasing periodical postage shuts off opportunity where it is most needed. It penalizes periodical readers.

Repeal this law. Repeal this FIFTY TO NINE HUNDRED PER CENT periodical postage increase. Sign the petition below and mail it. Save the periodicals and the work that they have done and are doing for national education and patriotism.

Paste a sheet of paper below and get signers.

When sufficient signatures are secured please send to Charles Johnson Post, 200 Fifth Avenue, New York City, where additional copies of this petition can be had upon request.

PETITION TO CONGRESS

The spread of education, of culture, of scientific knowledge and advancement, and of our vast internal merchandising and manufacturing has been, and always is, vitally dependent upon the freest and cheapest circulation of periodicals. The penalties resulting from any restriction of the freest possible circulation of periodicals will be destructive to the best interests of our economic life and the opportunities of developing our best citizenship.

The postal amendment passed by the last Congress increasing the postage on periodicals from FIFTY TO NINE HUNDRED PER CENT will destroy our periodicals at a time when the widest and most extensive circulation of publications is essential to the patriotism, education, and upbuilding of our country.

Therefore, we the undersigned, do most earnestly demand the repeal of this burdensome periodical postage amendment.

NAME ADDRESS 723 W. Lawrence CITY Charlotte STATE Mich

Pressure from Periodical Publishers · Magazines encouraged readers to petition Congress, complaining that zoned postage would reduce the availability of reading matter. Petitions such as this one were to be returned to Charles J. Post, head of a publishers' lobbying group, who forwarded them to Congress. (Reprinted from file 65A-H14.9, House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, RG 46, National Archives.)

Metropolitan dailies, resigned to the inevitability of some postage increase, nonetheless hoped to use their influence to modify the rates. ANPA, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, and the Inland Daily Press Association backed plans that would have saved newspapers, though not magazines, from the full effects of the rate hike.[78] Small-city dailies and country weeklies, however, broke ranks with the metropolitan press. Before the 1917 law, the rural press had remained mostly silent or had quietly supported its city counterparts. After the law's passage, small newspapers awakened to the advantages of zoned advertising postage. County, state, and regional press associations outside the Northeast adopted resolutions urging Congress to stand fast. The foremost advantage of the new law, according to a trade journal for the rural press, "is the fact that the publishers of periodicals of national circulation will be compelled to so increase their advertising rates that it will open the door of national advertising to the smaller papers as never before. . . ."[79]

[78] *Fourth Estate*, 27 Oct. 1917, 4; *Zone Systems: Hearings Before the House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads*, 65th Cong., 2d sess. (1918); *Fourth Estate*, 9 Feb. 1918, 11; *Printers' Ink*, 14 March 1918, 48; *Second-Class Postage Rates: Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads*, 65th Cong., 2d sess. (1918); May-July 1918 issues of *Printers' Ink*, *Publishers' Auxiliary*, *Fourth Estate*, *Newspaperdom*.

[79] G. E. Hosmer, "National Legislation Concerning the Welfare of Printers and Publishers," *National-Printer Journalist* 36 (April 1918): 196, 232 (on NEA's position); *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 27 April 1918, 1; 4 May 1918, 4; 11 May 1918, 4; "List of Press Associations

UNIV. LIBRARY

EAGUE

ALS

ted readers to petition Congress
lity of reading matter. Petitions
head of a publishers' lobbying
file 65A-H14.9, House Com
House of Representatives, R

lity of some postage
o modify the rates
sociation, and the
that would have saved
e full effects of the rate
s, however, broke ranks
law, the rural press had
ed its city counterparts
kened to the advantages
nd regional press associ-
ions urging Congress to
ew law, according to a
that the publishers of
elled to so increase their
national advertising to

fore the House Committee on Post
tate, 9 Feb. 1918, 11; *Printers'*
Before the Senate Committee on
y-July 1918 issues of *Printers'*

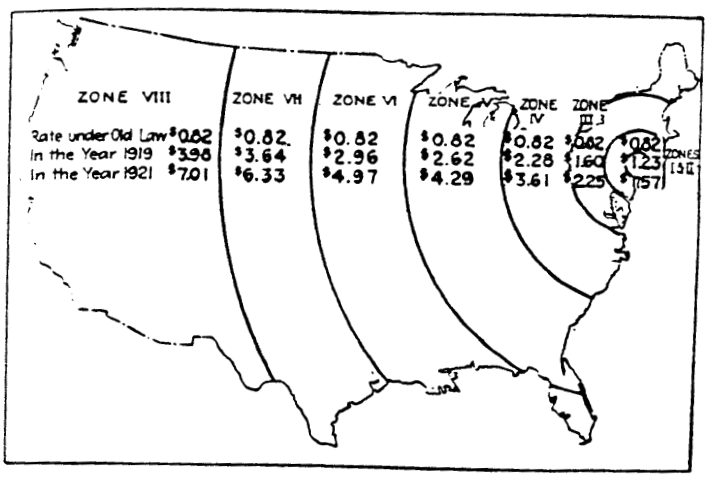
Welfare of Printers and Pub-
52 (on NEA's position); *Pub-*
, 4; "List of Press Associations

POWER

1 June 19 | New York, June 10, 1919 | Number 23

Where Do You Live?

This Map shows the zones created by the Postal Zone Law and the postage to be paid on your copy of Power.



NOTE—For the year 1918 we paid the penalty postage. For the year 1919 we are billing our subscribers who live west of the Mississippi $1 extra to cover a part of the Zone Postage. There will be another increase in postage in 1920 and still another in 1921. (See Map.) If the Zone law is not repealed, we shall be compelled to readjust our subscription price so that the Subscriber will pay according to the Zone in which he lives.

Prior to this Zone Law all citizens had equal rights.
Why should not these rights be restored?

Ask your Congressman!

Zoned Postage from the Publishers' Viewpoint · *Power*, a McGraw-Hill trade journal, used the cover of one issue to suggest to readers that they would bear the cost of the new postal law. (Reprinted from *Power* 49 [10 June 1919].)

The Post Office used its resources to strengthen the hand of lawmakers resisting the campaign to repeal the new postal policy. First assistant postmaster general John C. Koons furnished representatives and senators with data and arguments to use in responding to constituents.[80] Moreover, the department gathered data about publications that were most vocal in their opposition to the law.[81] In its most ambitious effort to buttress resolve in Congress, the Post Office in August 1919 surveyed newspaper publishers. Of 6,011 replies, 4,027 (67 percent) favored the law and only 1,984 (33 percent) opposed it. Reporting the findings by congressional districts and states, Koons used the survey to show that, despite the protests of national magazines and a few large dailies, newspapers in most lawmakers' districts welcomed zoned advertising postage.[82]

As 1 July 1918 neared, the Post Office issued the forms and instructions needed to calculate postage under the new schedule. Publishers continued to complain publicly about the complexity of the new law, but their circulation managers quietly and easily mastered its requirements. Once in effect, the new postal policy did seem to depress mailings slightly. Second-class mail declined by 3.86 percent during the law's first year, although Post Office revenue from this class rose by $4.4 million to a total of $16.1 million, nearly half earned from periodicals' advertising portions.[83]

Blaming the postage increase, publishers raised subscription rates, though trade publications admitted that other costs were being passed on to consumers as well. After the law took effect, magazines and, to a lesser extent, city newspapers tried to eliminate or modify the

---

Which Favor Zone Advances" [n.d.], file 182, POD Records (twenty-nine county, state and regional press associations); "Annual Address by President, National Editorial Association," *National-Printer Journalist* 36 (June 1918): 308; *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 1 June 1918, 1–2; J. H. Bloom, publisher of *Devils Lake Journal*, to Rep. J. A. Moon, 26 June 1918, H65A-F21.1, House Records; Hiley H. Ward, "Ninety Years of the National Newspaper Association" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1977), 231–32 (the NNA formerly was the NEA).

[80] For lawmakers' requests for information to counter publishers' propaganda, see correspondence between Koons and Rep. Herbert J. Drane, 26–28 March 1918; Rep. John Smith, 9–16 April 1918; Rep. John A. Key, 29 April–3 May 1918; Rep. W. A. Ayres, 9 May, 3 June 1918, all in file 182, POD Records.

[81] For the Post Office's efforts to gather intelligence on the *Nashville Banner*, see Koons to Kitchin, 9 March 1918; on *Southern Farming*, see correspondence between Ways and Means Committee and Koons, 9–13 April 1918; on the *Omaha World-Herald*, see Koons to Omaha postmaster, 17 Aug. 1918; on McGraw-Hill trade journals, see Koons to Rep. Carl Hayden, 14 Aug. 1919, all ibid. All vigorously opposed the zone law.

[82] Koons to Sen. Nathaniel B. Dial, 16 Feb. 1920, file 182, POD Records.

[83] *Printers' Ink*, 28 Feb. 1918, 61–63; *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 30 March 1918, 1; 11 May 1918, 1, 5; 18 May 1918, 1, 2, 5; *Annual Report* (1919), 17–21.

UNIV. LIBRARY

postal policy. Their efforts encountered stiffening opposition from the rural press and the One-Cent Letter Postage Association. By the early 1920s, zoned advertising postage had become firmly established as the basis for second-class mail policy. Congress continued to entertain postage-reduction bills but always within the framework devised in 1917.[84]

Conclusions

As debate over zoned advertising postage crested, the nation passed a milestone in its history: the 1920 census revealed that the United States had become a predominantly urban society. Although rural Americans and their representatives in Congress probably did not notice the precise moment when they became a minority, the 1917 postal reform represented a modest attempt to shore up their waning culture. About four years after the 1917 law passed, a permanent bipartisan farm bloc emerged in Congress to assure that rural interests regularly received an infusion of government resources.[85]

The 1917 zoned postage law somewhat belatedly recognized the dual nature of periodicals as commercial products conveying public information and culture. Although the American press has long cherished and extolled its independence from government, it joined other businesses in capitalizing on two government resources—subsidies, which shifted costs from private firms to the public, and regulations, which became weapons in intra-industry battles. Nowhere was this more apparent than in turn-of-the-century postal policymaking. Postal administrators, who confronted the American press as a business, launched the campaign to reform the subsidy but encountered stiff resistance from united publishers. Congress entered the fray, especially when President Taft pressed for higher rates, but Progressives initially rebuffed postal reform.

The solution—zoned advertising postage combined with a flat editorial rate—represented an ingenious policy that attracted a diverse coalition. For administrators, basing postage on distance transported

[84] *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 27 July 1918, 1. On the continuing efforts of magazines and large newspapers to repeal the law, see Jane Kennedy, "United States Postal Rates, 1845–1951" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1955), 56–61; Irving I. Raines, "The Second-Class Postal Rate Controversy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1953), 53–77. On efforts to bolster the law, see *Justification of Zone-System Advances in Postal Rates of Advertising Matter in Periodicals* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1918); and resolutions of press associations and letters from editors, July–15 Nov. 1919, H66A-H15.5, House Records.

[85] Gilbert C. Fite, *American Farmers: The New Minority* (Bloomington, Ind., 1981), 1–41.

and advertising content partly obviated inquiries into periodicals' intent or character, a frustrating endeavor that raised the specter of censorship. For the small-town press, the law promised relief from head-to-head competition with regional and national publications. For politicians actuated by feelings of partisanship or vindictiveness, it meant a diminished subsidy for unfriendly magazines and metropolitan dailies. Zoned advertising postage ultimately capitalized on tensions between small and mass retailers, among regions, and between rural and urban culture—schisms that overlapped and reinforced one another.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE LIBRARY